

I haven't reviewed a *Seventh-day Adventist Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* (SSBSG) in its entirety since 2017. I find it unpleasant to attend Sabbath School where corrupt bibles are part of the lessons so I rarely attend. I get much more benefit from personal study.

This quarter's SSBSG is on the book of Revelation. In the 1950s there was another SSBSG on the book of Revelation that omitted discussion of Revelation 13. Ranko Stefanovic, PhD, the principal contributor to this SSBSG wrote a book and it was said he failed to identify the Papal Power as one of the beasts. I have not read his book so don't know if that's true. Be that as it may, the SSBSG under discussion does identify the papal power.

The Bible Book Shelf

The Pacific Press Publishing Association now prints "Bible Book Shelf" which are books that elaborate on the quarter's SSBSG. Maybe this is something new as I hadn't been aware of it before. The 128 page Bible Book Shelf book for this lesson is also by Ranko Stefanovic and titled *The Book of Revelation* and at the time of this writing is available for \$14.99 from AdventistBookCenter.com. While the SSBSG is rife with quotations from the New King James Version (NKJV) this book allegedly only uses the King James Bible, the New American Standard Bible (NASB) in bunches of places and the Revised Standard Version (RSV). Many quotations from the NASB don't credit that version which would make one think were from the King James Bible. On page 17 toward the bottom where Revelation 1:4 is referenced as saying, "Grace and peace to you" the bible used is the New International Version (NIV) with no credit saying that was so. That's not the only place a text from the NIV wasn't credited to that source (i.e., page 33). On page 79 there is a quotation from the Modern English Version (MEV) with no credit given to that bible. On page 98 where Revelation 15:1 is referenced and says "the wrath of God is completed" I could not find the exact version it was taken from. It's possible that the quotation should have been "the wrath of God is complete" and then it would have fit the NKJV.

On page 35 of the book Ranko notes that the church of Thyatira is promised "the morning star, which is a symbol of Jesus." Going to his favored NASB you will find in Isaiah 14:12 that:

"How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations!"

In the King James Bible you will find the ONLY verse in the real Protestant Bible that names Lucifer is Isaiah 14:12. In the NASB a title for Jesus Christ has replaced Lucifer.

The NASB is almost as bad as the New International Version (NIV). Another of the many corruptions in the NASB can be found in 2 Samuel 21:19 where it says Elhanan killed Goliath. In 1 Chronicles 20:5 the NASB says Elhanan killed the brother of Goliath and in 1 Samuel 17 you can read the story of David killing Goliath. The NASB is far from an infallible Bible. The “archaic” King James Bible doesn’t have this problem.

On page 53 Ranko writes:

“The Greek word used for ‘crown’ is *stephanos*, ‘the crown of victory’ (cf. 2 Timothy 4:8), which was a garland given to winners at the ancient Olympic Games.”

I looked up that text in the King James Bible, the NIV, the NKJV, the RSV, the English Standard Version (ESV), the MEV, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), Wiclif Bible of 1380, the Tyndale Bible of 1534, the Cranmer Bible of 1539, the Geneva Bible of 1557 and the Rheims Bible (RB) of 1582. Except for the Rheims Bible, they ALL said “crown of righteousness.” The RB said “crovvne of iustice.” The spelling in the RB is not a mistake; in the older bibles where we would use the letter “j” they used “i.” In some bibles for our “w” they used either “uu” or “vv.” In some countries, instead of calling “w” a “double u” it is called a “double v” which is a more accurate description.

It would appear Ranko should use a different Greek dictionary.

I bought the “Bible Book Shelf” book this time but don’t think I’ll buy any more until they’re cleaned up. At least I got a \$5 discount and free shipping.

The Corrupt Bibles of the SSBSG

In the best tradition of Andrews University (and I jest since I doubt J. N. Andrews would approve) Dr. Stefanovic used eight bibles aside from the King James Bible three of which are Roman Catholic Bibles (the RSV, the English Standard Version (ESV) and the New Revised Standard Version). Why, I’m not sure. Perhaps he doesn’t believe any bible is God’s Word. Maybe he thinks the bibles of the Roman Catholic Church have something special that other bibles don’t have (actually, except for the King James Bible, they’re all essentially Roman Catholic bibles).

The MEV is referenced in this Lesson Quarterly and I don’t remember other principal contributors using it. The MEV is an updated NKJV bible so no better than that one which is pretty bad. Another of Ranko’s special bibles is the Contemporary English Version (CEV) which, in Genesis 6:1-2 says, “More and more people were born, until finally they spread all over the earth. Some of their daughters were so beautiful that supernatural beings came down and married the ones they wanted.” The CEV in Colossians 2:16 says, “Don’t let anyone tell you what you must eat or

drink. Don't let them say that you must celebrate the New Moon festival, the Sabbath, or any other festival." A real good choice of bibles Ranko (and I jest again).

Corrupt bibles promote corrupt doctrines and make people think it doesn't matter too much what they believe or which bible they use. If people are astute enough to see upon a corruption, they have to go to their pastor or priest to have it explained which is exactly what Satan wants. Confidence in any Bible being the infallible Word of God is eroded.

Dr. Stefanovic made some errors in his exposition of scripture that can be blamed on his use of corrupt bibles (mostly the NKJV). On page 39 he says:

"The rider's name is Death; meanwhile, Hades, the place of the dead, accompanies him."

You will not find the word hell in the book of Revelation in the NKJV. Everywhere the King James Bible had hell in that book, Hades has been substituted. Corrupt bibles in general only use the word hell for the hot place while in the Protestant King James Bible hell was also used for death or the grave. The problem with the use of Hades is that Hades was the god of the underworld in Greek mythology and his subjects in Hades are conscious and are ruled by him. Our doctor of the law throughout the Lesson Quarterly gives a profusion of Greek words that won't help anyone and he fails to elaborate on the meaning of Hades.

In the NKJV Old Testament, where the translators didn't wish to use the word hell, they used Sheol. According to Wikipedia the inhabitants of Sheol are the "shades" that are "without personality or strength" but "under some circumstances they are thought to be able to be contacted by the living." Ranko didn't comment on that either.

The NKJV favors the doctrine of consciousness in death and immediate punishment after death in 2 Peter 2:9:

"then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,"

That text as written fits very well with the doctrine that the wicked go directly to the hot place when they die. The King James Bible says the unjust will be reserved "unto the day of judgment to be punished" while the NKJV say they are "under punishment" (apparently dead and consciousness) while waiting for the judgment.

On page 82 in the teachers edition of the SSBSG Dr. Ranko notes that as the RSV and ESV say we are to be "imitators of God" and that "The believer is to imitate the character of God." The King James Bible says we are to be followers of God. A follower is not the same as an imitator. Satan imitates God but does not follow Him.

On page 101 Dr. Ranko states in regard to Revelation 19:8 that:

“Thus the ‘fine linen, clean and bright’ represents ‘the righteous acts of the saints’ (NKJV).”

That is Roman Catholic doctrine. The King James Bible says:

“And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”

Fine linen represents the righteousness of Christ by which we will be clothed and not our righteous acts. The first part of the text makes it clear that this is the meaning intended. When the text says “granted” it means she was given. We are given Christ’s righteousness. As it says in Isaiah 64:6, “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” which is a bit different than “fine linen, clean and white.”

“To the church it is given ‘that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white,’ ‘not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.’ Rev. 19:8; Eph. 5:27. The fine linen, says the Scripture, ‘is the righteousness of saints.’ Rev. 19:8. It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character, that through faith is imparted to all who receive Him as their personal Saviour.” *Christ’s Object Lessons* page 310.

As an aside, the word dragon comes up nowhere in the NKJV except in the book of Revelation. Yes, that’s important.

Maybe Faulty Math

In Lesson 6 Ranko takes on the identity of the 144,000. As he notes, on page 50, “The identity of the 144,000 is a hotly debated issue.” Ranko attempts to answer that question on page 46 where he says:

“The reference here is not to a literal number but to what it signifies.”
OK Ranko, I’m listening.

“The number 144,000 consists of 12 times 12 times 1,000.” Yes Ranko, your math is correct.

“Twelve is a symbol of God’s people: the tribes of Israel and the church built upon the foundation of the Twelve Apostles (*Eph. 2:20*).” Ephesians 2:20 says, “And are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” The word “and” means you add the number of apostles and prophets together. There were twelve apostles but when you add the prophets

to that, the number comes out to a lot more than twelve. The math is faulty and Ephesians 2:20 does not support the postulated symbolic nature of the number 144,000.

Are there any other places in Scripture where a number is symbolic? I don't think so but still Ranko, I'm listening. If numbers are symbolic, where do you stop? You might say, yes, "how about the 'time, times, and an half' in Daniel 12:7?" That question can be answered by simple algebra:

Where $a = 360$ (the number of days in a year in the Jewish calendar).

Where a day in Bible prophetic symbology = 1 year and where a "time" is a year of 360 days.

$\text{time} + \text{times} + \text{time}/2 = a + 2a + a/2 = 3.5a = 1,260$ years.

There is symbolic language used in prophecy but if you start calling the numbers symbolic where do you stop? Is the number 1,260 symbolic? Ranko, please give me ONE number besides the 144,000 in the Bible that is clearly symbolic. I'm listening.

On page 15 of *Early Writings of Ellen G. White* (copyright date of 1882 and a print date of 1938) it says:

"The living saints, 144,000 in number, knew and understood the voice, while the wicked thought it was thunder and an earthquake."

It doesn't appear that Ellen White thought the number 144,000 to be symbolic.

I believe the reluctance to believe the number 144,000 is literal is that it's too repugnant for the current generation to believe that out of the millions of current Seventh-day Adventists, only that small number will be translated without seeing death. As unpalatable as that thought may be, we need to go by what the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy say and not by what we think they should say. As in the days of Noah, some saints will be laid to rest before the trouble begins and some, probably many, will be martyred for their faith.

On page 49 of Lesson 6 the question is asked:

"How can we live a life of sanctification in active preparation for eternity and yet not suffer from the pitfalls of perfectionism and fanatical holiness"

There are NO pitfalls of perfectionism. Mathew 5:48 says "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect." You will find NO place in the Bible or Spirit of Prophecy where it's said the overcomers will be less than perfect (or just or righteous which mean the same thing). As for "fanatical holiness," yes, that's bad. An example would be those adults who around 1844 crawled around on hands and knees because Jesus said we should be as little children. It is a common ploy of

scoffers, the lax and unbelievers to refer to those trying to follow Jesus Christ in everything as “fanatics.” I will be delighted to be called a fanatic in the latter sense.

The Greek

Happily, this English edition of the SSBSG gave very few Hebrew lessons. Sadly, there were numerous references to the Greek. In the United States of America most people speak English. In the average Sabbath School class, I probably know more Greek than any of the others and my knowledge of Greek is pathetically limited. The ONLY reason for there to be a discussion of what the Greek or Hebrew says in an English SSBSG is to demonstrate the learning and erudition of the author. Obviously because they know so much about the vaunted Greek, we should swallow everything they say hook, line and sinker. After attending Sabbath School for twenty years and getting quarterly Greek and Hebrew lessons from the SSBSG it would be the rare pupil that remembered more than maybe five Greek or Hebrew words and that is probably a generous estimate. Hearing what the Greek says merely lets the students believe they have studied the Word of God with special intensity. The students receive no working knowledge of biblical Greek. The King James Bible is the infallible Word of God in English; we don't need ANY Greek or Hebrew expertise to understand it.

Scholars like to talk about “the original” Greek and Dr. Stefanovic is no exception. Speaking of “the original” Greek makes you think they have actually seen “the original” and that, if you're learned and wealthy enough, you could acquire a manuscript in the “original Greek” and read it. NO ONE now living has ever seen a first-off original manuscript of ANY Greek or Hebrew Scripture. The only thing they have ever seen are copies of Scripture and in many cases “the Greek” is Westcott's and Hort's cooked up Greek text they “corrected” with the Roman Catholic Vaticanus and Sinaiticus.

On page 104, Dr. Stefanovic notes “John's reference to ‘the sea’ (with the definite article).” In the RSV, which is one of his endorsed bibles, Exodus 20:10 says the Seventh day is “a sabbath” while the King James Bible got the definite article right in that verse since it says the seventh day is “the sabbath.” In the “Teachers Comments” section of the SSBSG on page 120 Dr. Stefanovic makes a big point about past and future verb tenses in Revelation 12 and 13. Read Ezekiel 28 in your NKJV. You will find it says the “anointed cherub” in verse 14, which is Satan, has been turned to ashes (past tense) in verse 18. In other words, according to the NKJV Satan is already dead. So Dr. Stefanovic uses mostly the NKJV and thinks verb tenses matter in Revelation 12 and 13 and the NKJV got it wrong in Ezekiel 28. Amazing! It would be funny if it wasn't the Word of God being mangled. Oh yes, and the archaic King James Bible got the verb tenses right in Revelation AND in Ezekiel; imagine that.

On page 7, Dr. Stefanovic mentions the Septuagint. He doesn't say anywhere that it was written before the time of Christ which is good. Just to make it perfectly clear, the Septuagint is a Greek translation of the Old Testament but it was not translated by 72 Jewish scholars and it didn't exist until after Jesus and all the apostles had died. Neither Jesus nor any of the writers of New Testament Scripture ever quoted anything from the Septuagint. Not many Seventh-day Adventist ministers and scholars know this.

On page 21 of the SSBSG Dr. Stefanovic discusses the Nicolaitans and says their problem was with sexual immorality and eating things offered to idols. Since Jesus says he "hates" their deeds in Revelation 2:6, it would seem important to know what it was about them God hated. It's apparent their deeds did have something to do with fornication and eating things offered to idols but that's about it. Unlike most other words the Bible doesn't provide much more information about them. This is a word for which even some King James Bible advocates fall back on the Greek to explain saying it has something to do with a priestly cast or a deacon that said it was OK to share wives, etc. Fortunately I have The Mission Study Bible (a King James Bible) with Ellen G. White comments which answers the question. On page 470 of the New Testament section you can read that:

"The doctrine is now largely taught that the gospel of Christ has made the law of God of no effect; that by 'believing' we are released from the necessity of being doers of the Word. But this is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which Christ so unsparingly condemned (ST Jan. 2, 1912)."

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans is the "once save always saved" doctrine taught in so many denominations.

The Long Con

On page 40 of the teachers edition of the SSBSG brother Stefanovic says:

"The structure of the messages to the seven churches exhibits a literary form that is grounded in Hebrew logic."

I have heard or read similar statements in sermons where the "Semitic mind" or the "Hebrew mind" was discussed. It's possible that Dr. Stefanovic made the statement innocently but that terminology lays the groundwork for the belief that the way their minds worked was different than ours and that perhaps not all said by those with the "Hebrew mind" or "Hebrew logic" is applicable in modern times. On further expansion, it becomes the Jews, with their Semitic minds, hated women and that's why Paul said women couldn't be elders.

We know some of the Jews with their Semitic minds hated Jesus who also had a Semitic mind and some probably even hated women who had Semitic minds but neither Jesus, nor Paul with his Semitic mind nor any other author of sacred Scripture with a Semitic or Hebrew mind or logic justified the hatred of women.

On page 16 of the teachers edition of the SSBSG, Ranko uses the name Yahweh for the name of God and doesn't mention the bible he got that from. At least one bible, the New Living Translation, has Yahweh in Exodus 6:3. Ranko didn't get that name from the King James Bible. The reason this matters is that scholarly German skeptics came up with that word in an attempt to link the God of Israel to old pagan gods named Yaho, Yahu and Ya-ve (see pages 414-435 of *In Awe of Thy Word* by G. A. Riplinger).

Here are two excellent quotations from this edition of the SSBSG.

On page 90 *The Great Controversy* is quoted where it says "None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict." Don't waste your time in studying from a corrupt bible.

On page 95 brother Stefanovic says, "Though living in an age of ecumenism, Protestants would do well to remember the terrible persecution of the past, because, according to prophecy, something similar, but only worse, will happen again."

Here is one final quotation that isn't from the SSBSG found on page 595 of *The Great Controversy*.

"Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will."

There is a BIG STORM coming. Don't use the wrong guide book.

SatanIsDead.com
InfallibleBible.com
AdventistsToday.com
SabbathSchoolGuide.com