

Sabbath Recorder

Wait for it...

*The Lord is not slow
in doing what he promised
—2 Peter 3:9*



Promise made...

Micah 5:2 ESV – But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

Promise kept...

Luke 2: 8-14 ESV – And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

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Sabbath Recorder

A monthly journey into the mind and heart.

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Patricia Cruzan, Editor

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WHO ARE SEVENTH DAY BAPTISTS?

If you've never read *The Sabbath Recorder* before, you might be wondering who Seventh Day Baptists are. Like other Baptists, we believe in:

- salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus.
- the Bible as the inspired Word of God. The Bible is our authority for our faith and daily conduct.
- baptism of believers, by immersion, witnessing to our acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord.
- freedom of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- the congregational form of church government. Every church member has the right to participate in the decision-making process of the church.

THE SEVENTH DAY

God commanded that the seventh day (Saturday) be kept holy. Jesus agreed by keeping it as a day of worship. We observe the seventh day of the week (Saturday) as God's Holy Day as an act of loving obedience—not as a means of salvation. Salvation is the free gift of God through Jesus our Lord. It is the joy of the Sabbath that makes SDBs a people with a difference.

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Can you even imagine it? He spent *such* a long time in hiding, with his 600 men. Those men had all, at one point, seemed to understand what it had meant that he was anointed. Lately, they were more and more blinded by exhaustion and trial. They had even seen him sneak up behind his pursuer and not only *not* kill him but cut off part of his clothes and give it to him later. That must have been very frustrating. On some level you really can't blame them. You have to wonder if they understood what it was going to mean to follow this king that God had chosen. And that's how it was. God had chosen him—so they had chosen him. Nonetheless, waiting is hard even under the very best of circumstances. These were *not* the best of circumstances.

Sarah is another one who had to wait. Can you even imagine it? She lived through decade after decade of not having the child for which she so longed. I would think she must have grown bitter at times. For me, I imagine that she came to a kind of peace with being looked at as the woman who failed her husband (as the world would have seen it). I could very well be wrong there. In any case, the culture around her would always see her as being a *lesser* woman. Then when she heard that she was all set to conceive, it sounded ridiculous to her; she was *long* past that time. She was old enough to have great-grandchildren. She laughed. *She laughed at the idea that God would be that faithful...but God was. God is.*

It's not unlike the long wait for the Messiah, only on a very different scale. They'd known for centuries that a mysterious figure was going to come and save them. Then, as humans do, they built lots of ideas into the promise that were never intended. I imagine they spent years waiting for the Messiah to throw out the Greeks. Later, they were waiting for Him to throw out the Romans. Even the disciples didn't seem to understand that they were really waiting for the defeat of a *far* worse enemy.

Continued on next page...



Worshiping in the Wait

By Pastor Chuck Meathrell

He's not going to fail in His mission to rescue you from whatever cave you're in.

Continued from previous page...

Recently my wife was having trouble getting a treatment scheduled. She suffers from Multiple Sclerosis and every six months she returns to the infusion center to get her medicine; it's a long four- or five-hour process. For her last treatment, it took at least three weeks and two cancellations to make it happen. There always seemed to be a barrier of some kind: insurance or scheduling problems. By the end of the wait, she was beginning to think about giving up on the treatment altogether. Then, when the day finally came, she was greeted by the same nurse who had helped her through her first treatment. We'd been praying, and some of our loved ones had been praying, for angels to surround and protect her. That nurse had held her hand through that first treatment—a real blessing to her in a hard, sad moment. Then after a long period of frustration, she'd done it again months later, not having seen her in between. That nurse's name was Angel.

He is so faithful. He is so good. It's one of those things—the Lord is not slow in doing what He promised—that is so easy to say in our day-to-day life but when we've been waiting for a long time...well, you know. We're a forgetful species, just like the ancient Jews who forgot that God had brought them out of Egypt in a great outpouring of miracles. David knew that story and perhaps it gave him courage from the cool of his cave. Sometimes even David forgot.

You must remember how David's story went. His story didn't end in that cave. Saul never "got" him, hard as he tried. David was in danger, even grave danger, many times. Also, he was never really in danger; he had made a promise. He had made a series of promises...and our God never fails.

That wait is part of our story. I don't suppose many *Sabbath Recorder* readers are hiding in caves, at least not literal ones. I do think that many of us are waiting. Waiting is part of our journey. There we are in our hiding places, with the enemy so close we could cut off his garment and give it to him. But here's the catch: you could touch *him* (don't do that, obviously) but *he can't touch you*. How amazing. How wonderful. If you

didn't get it from that last sentence, here's this: *if you give yourself to Jesus, the enemy can never have you.*

I'm not a patient man by nature, but the waiting which has been part of my life has had a habit of reminding me of who God is. What do we know about Him? We know that He is good. (Mark 10:18) We know that He is love. (1 John 4:16) We know that even while we are *impatient*, He is not. (2 Peter 3:8-10a) We know that He loves us. (1 John 4:9-10). Most importantly for the purposes of this article, He is *faithful*. (Isaiah 25:1 and *many, many* others).

What does that mean for us? What does it mean that He is good, love, patient, loves us and is faithful? It means that He's not going to fail in His mission to rescue you from whatever cave you're in. He will never fail, even though you might feel like your time for "having a child" (or whatever the promise is to you) has faded to beyond a reasonable hope. He hasn't forgotten you, though there may be a brutal, occupying force all around you. The simple and absolute truth is that if God has promised it, it will happen. It doesn't matter much whether it makes sense. It didn't make sense to Sarah. It certainly didn't always make sense to the 600 men. It didn't even always make sense that the Messiah would ever come and ransom "captive Israel," as the old song goes.

For now, though, we do the hard part: we wait. In faith—we wait and understand all those characteristics of God I spelled out here. You don't need to understand how He is going to do it; He just is. And now, knowing those characteristics and a lot of others, we bring worship.

You're probably waiting for something. I can sure tell you that I am right now—but I'm worshiping Him in the wait because I know who He is. Won't you join me? [SR](#)

Pastor Chuck Meathrell has been pastor of the Pataskala SDB Church since 2020. He's married to Jessica and they have three sons. He has published two works of fiction and is working on more.

Even in the Waiting

By Bethany Lawton



Have you walked into a store recently and noticed that there's a mix of Halloween discount and Christmas decorations? Recently I went to Target (pronounced Tar-jay) to stock up on Halloween candy for our neighborhood trick-or-treating. I saw that they already had Christmas decorations and lights ready to be sold to the eager beaver who wants to skip Thanksgiving! It was so ridiculous to me that I took a quick video and shared my shock with my unassuming husband. He did not share my outrage. It almost feels like as a society we have trouble being in the present and cannot wait until the next thing.

We are all waiting in some form or another. Aren't we? Waiting for tomorrow, for the weekend, for Christmas, for the New Year, for a certain age, for a certain experience; waiting for the train, for an appointment, for a promotion; waiting in-between a promise made and a promise fulfilled; waiting for change to happen; waiting for a dream to become reality.

With each season of waiting come different challenges and unique opportunities. I'm sure a few come to your mind when thinking about certain situations. How are we waiting? Are we making the most of every opportunity—even in the waiting? We have the opportunity to remain faithful or choose impatience. We have the choice to continue to build or tear down while we wait.

There is still something for us to do in the waiting. Like the Israelites in exile, on some level, the Lord's instruction remains for us:

Jeremiah 29:4-7

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.



Are we
making the
most of every
opportunity—
even in the
waiting?

What does this look like? Wherever you find yourself waiting, God wants you to flourish and be about His business. We are to seek the welfare of those around us and be a reflection of the Kingdom where we find our true citizenship.

What makes waiting and staying in the present bearable? Knowing that the One who holds the future has your best interest in mind. That He is for you and knows what's best. He isn't keeping things from you but is holding blessings for you until the appropriate time. Even better, He is with us in the waiting.

Next time you find yourself waiting, look up from your phone, look around, and see how the Lord would like you to participate in His kingdom.

May we be able to be in the present and remain faithful. May we trust in the One who holds the future so much so that we can stay in the present. May we participate in His kingdom, even in the waiting. SR

Bethany Lawton lives in Chicago, IL, with her unassuming husband, Phil. She works for a non-profit organization in the Loop. Together they are working to build Kingdom community in their neighborhood.



How long?

By Scott Hausrath

My high school English teacher was passing out copies of the book we would soon be reading and discussing. “Mr. Rudnick,” I said to him, with a tone of snotty disdain in my voice, “how long will it take us to get through *Romeo and Juliet*?”

How long? This is a question that is asked every day by billions of people. A recent widow is asking, “How long will I feel so lost without my husband?” A friend is asking, “How long until I can find a decent job?” A mom is asking, “How long will it take for my son to finally realize that he needs to stop drinking?” A child is asking, “How long until my folks stop screaming at each other?” How long? Is this such a bad question to be asking?

Fortunately, my English teacher is a wise man. He said to me, “Scott, if we just try to *get through* this book, then we’ll try to *get through* the next book, and the next, and the next. At some point we’ll realize that, instead of *living* our lives, we’re just trying to *get through* our lives.” Mic drop.

Mr. Rudnick was right. The problem wasn’t the book, or my extremely immature perspective on the book. The problem was that during my high school years my perspective on life itself was seriously underdeveloped.

Our waiting leads us to seek help from God which in turn equips us to think and behave more and more like God's Son.

Five years later, however, God opened my eyes. He enabled me to see who He is, who I am, and how life makes sense only when lived with the biblical perspective that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. The apostle Paul puts it this way in 2 Corinthians 5:15: "And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again."

Before my encounter with the one true God, I couldn't see that living for my own satisfaction and pleasure was bringing dissatisfaction and displeasure. Seventeenth century philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal reflected on this truth in his posthumously titled work *Pensées*: "What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself."

My very uneloquent summation of Pascal's eloquence goes like this: Many things can conceal our emptiness, but only God can conquer our emptiness. It seems that David, the author of Psalm 25, had also come to this conclusion. In verses 4-5 of this Psalm he shares with us a deep desire to seek the things of God: "Show me Your ways, O Lord, teach me Your paths; guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are God my Savior, and my hope is in You all day long."

Now that I find myself sharing the perspective of Pascal and David, have I stopped asking "How long?" No, I still ask this

question. For example, I recently asked my sister how long it would take for my niece to fully recover from her brain surgery. Then I asked God to give my niece a perspective that would enable her to become a more mature person as she negotiated weeks and possibly months in a rehab facility. I was still acknowledging my own feelings of frustration, but I was also acknowledging that the source of my frustration, the waiting, was a powerful catalyst in the process of my niece's becoming more conformed to the image of Jesus. Huh? What does Jesus have to do with my niece's brain surgery and consequent prolonged rehabilitation?

Here's what I'm talking about. The biblical perspective on life shows us that our lives are about more than *our* needs, *our* desires, *our* purposes. For example, no matter what *our* purpose is, *God's* purpose is to help us become more and more like Jesus: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters" (Romans 8:28-29). Waiting is one of the key ingredients in this conformation process. Our waiting leads us to seek help from God, like David did in Psalm 25, which in turn equips us to think and behave more and more like God's Son. It's a day-by-day process, which by definition entails lots of waiting.

As we're going through our daily challenges and frustrations, and we're waiting and wanting, what can we do to start feeling less frustrated and more fulfilled? One thing I'm trying to do is to focus less on *my* perspective of my situation, and focus more on *God's* perspective of it.

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How Long?

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When I was living in central Nebraska, I joined the Christian Motorcyclists Association. The CMA is a group of people who love to ride motorcycles and love to share with others the hope that comes through following Jesus Christ. I was blessed to go on a number of rides with my fellow bikers, and one thing we frequently discussed was the phrase “The journey is the destination.” Instead of focusing only on “getting there,” we tried to take in and appreciate each mile along the road to “there.” We found that focusing on the journey, as it developed mile by mile, enabled us to more fully appreciate the destination, no matter how long we had to wait for that destination. In fact, those things that made us wait longer (mechanical issues, missed connections, weather delays, etc.) also significantly increased our fulfillment upon reaching that destination. When we were more engaged with the process, we were also more engaged with the result of the process.

Proverbs 16:9 reminds me of this dynamic: “In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.” It seems that we humans naturally focus on our destination, but the Lord is with us in the details. This is what I meant when I said that I’m trying to focus less on *my* perspective, and focus more on *God’s* perspective.

It’s important to have a course (a destination), but our daily lives are lived, and our growth in godliness occurs, as we engage with the daily drama of our journey. Waiting is a significant part of that daily drama.

It’s been almost 50 years since my high school English class with Mr. Rudnick, and I’m still asking the question “How long?” However, I’m trying to ask the question with less of a tone of snotty disdain. I’m trying to focus less on *getting through* my daily challenges, so I can focus more on *growing through* my daily challenges. Realizing that our precious Lord is *with me* in the drama gives me a much healthier perspective as I wait on the details.

I thank God that He shared with me the same perspective that He had shared with Blaise Pascal, David, and countless others. I also invite you to share this perspective and this daily journey of being conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. It is so worth the wait. [SR](#)

When he was in college, Scott Hausrath became a follower of Jesus Christ. After four decades, he’s still learning how to apply a biblical perspective to the everyday challenges of life. One day at a time...

God Waits

Continued from page 11

We also see something else from the example of Noah. 1 Peter 3:20 says that God exhibited patience in the days of Noah. Why? The Sovereign God had every right to wipe out the inhabitants of this corrupt earth, but He waited. God demonstrated His patience with Noah, presumably, so that people would have a chance to repent. This is the same answer to the question, why has Christ not yet returned? The answer is also the same: there are still people yet to be redeemed. God continues to wait...

During this time of year our thoughts turn to the birth of Christ. Jesus Christ left the glories of Heaven, veiled in human flesh. He came for a purpose—to seek and to save the lost (Mark 16:15). He was born for us,

lived for us, died for us, was resurrected for us, and ascended to Heaven to make intercession for us. That was nearly two thousand years ago. The people of Paul’s day felt that they were living in the last days, and here we are with 2023 coming to a close. As we wait on the return of Christ, I pray that we do not look at the waiting as an inconvenience or a chore. We are told to be busy as we wait on the return of Christ! Just as Noah obeyed God, so too must we! [SR](#)

Tim Smothers serves at Battle Creek Seventh Day Baptist Church, where he has pastored for the last 11 years. He and his wife Karen enjoy music and time spent with their family.



God Waits

By Pastor Tim Smothers

*There are
still people
yet to be
redeemed.*

*God
continues
to wait...*

Confession time... I hate having to wait. I saw some statistics on the amount of time that the average person spends waiting on things in their lifetime. The average person in their lifetime spends two to three years waiting in line, six months waiting at traffic lights, 43 days on hold—and the list goes on. It is no wonder that we as people get frustrated at times and lash out at those who would dare make us do the unthinkable—wait!

Why is it that we hate having to wait? Well, waiting requires patience, and that is something that is in very short supply these days. We live in a world where we are used to having things right away. Microwaves, smart phones, and email are just a few examples of these modern-day conveniences. Instant gratification has become our way of life, and we have lost sight of the blessings and joys that come from waiting. Is there joy in waiting? There sure is—if we take the time to be patient and wait...

When we read scripture, we see that waiting was also a part of everyday life. I can't help but think of Noah. Genesis 6 describes the earth as corrupt in God's sight, and full of violence. Noah, however, was different than the culture around him. Noah found favor in God's sight, and because of that, was given the monumental task to build the ark. This was no simple task. God gave him the dimensions of the ark as well as the materials to build it. But still, it took 100 years. That is a long time. While he was waiting, he was working. Genesis 6:22 simply says that he did all that God had commanded him. In the face of God's wrath on a sinful world, he didn't wallow or lament, but rather followed God and built the ark.

Peter references Noah in his writings as well. 2 Peter 2:5 describes Noah as a herald of righteousness. Noah is one who tries to warn those around him of God's judgment that would come over them. Jesus describes this time of Noah in Luke 17:26-27. People in Noah's day continued to eat, drink, get married, and live their lives as they saw fit. Noah tried to warn them of what was to happen, but they were too obsessed with doing what they wanted to do. Nobody would listen to Noah, but that never stopped him from telling others.

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Wait For It

By Pastor Ericessen Cooper

There are so many things that we may be waiting for depending what stage of life we are going through. Little children have a difficult time waiting for Christmas and their birthday. Teenagers have an equally difficult time waiting to grow up or get their driver's license. Young adults wait for the time they are on their own or getting married. Adults wait for the time when their children will be all grown, married and successful.

We are all waiting for something or someone. It speaks of anticipation and hope, but what do we do while we are waiting?

Abram was promised by God that his seed would be as the stars in the sky. Quite a promise to a man whose wife was considered barren. Initially, Abram figured that God must have meant that one of his servants would be his heir and through that one his seed would be multiplied, but that wasn't God's plan. (Genesis 15: 1-5)

So many times in our lives we come upon junctures, little or sometimes big bumps on life's winding road, and what do we immediately do? We begin trying to figure out how to maneuver out of this spot in which we have found ourselves. We begin thinking about what we need to do or who we need to call. What does the Bible say we should do? Proverbs 3:6 says this: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy paths." Acknowledging God is not the first thing on our minds when life throws us a curve, but the scriptures advise

us to do just that. We honestly don't seek God first because we don't want to wait. Like Abram, we want that quick resolution to the situation we are facing. The solution is right here—my servant can be the heir. I can just ask my friend and he will gladly solve my problem. But what happens when that is not the plan that God had for you and things begin going awry? Abram and his wife, Sarai, thought that they had the perfect plan to aid God in His promise. The wait was getting too long, years had passed, and nothing was happening, so they concocted the plan to use Hagar, Sarai's handmaid, to be the bearer of Abram's seed. That must be God's plan. After all, it's Abram's seed and Sarai would be a surrogate mother. Perfect! But that wasn't God's plan. Abram and Sarai didn't wait on God. The promised child was not born unto Abraham and Sarah until twenty-five years after God promised Abram that He would make of him a great nation. Are we willing to wait on the Lord, no matter how long it takes?

In Isaiah 40:31 the verse says, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." Does our waiting draw us closer to our Father? Do we get closer to Him through prayer, supplication, meditation, fasting, praising, and studying His Word? Waiting is not meant to drain us or cause anxiety. Waiting is a time for us to draw closer to God. Isaiah says that our strength will be renewed, not

diminished. We should be getting stronger in our faith, especially when we see His hands working things out in our lives. We will mount up above all our circumstances because we know the One who upholds us with His mighty right hand. The verse closes by contrasting those who wait on God with young men who rely on their own devices (v. 30). They will faint and fall because they don't know their Creator and they don't put their trust in Him. But we who have put our trust in God and wait on His leading won't get weary in well-doing and we won't faint as we walk by faith with Him.

In I Samuel 30 the Word speaks of a time when David came back home to Ziklag only to find that everyone's wives and children were kidnapped and taken away. His own men were threatening to stone him, but the scriptures said that David called for the ephod, he inquired of the Lord what should be his next move, and he encouraged himself in the Lord. Despite all that was happening around him, David looked to God. It should have been evident to go after the people who had taken all their loved ones captive, but David acknowledged the Lord

and waited for His response as to what to do. The Lord not only told him what to do, but He also told him the outcome. That's the God we serve. The song says, "If you trust and never doubt, He will surely bring you out. Take your burdens to the Lord and leave them there."

What are you waiting for? Whatever it is, bring it to the Lord. Acknowledge Him as your Sovereign King, the One who knows your beginning from the end. The One who is on your side and has promised to never forsake you. His promises are true, and while you are waiting, draw closer to Him, trust Him more, and surrender everything to Him. He won't fail you. [SR](#)

Ericessen Cooper has been the pastor of the New York City SDB Church in Brooklyn, NY, since 2005. He is married to his wife of 35 years, Crystal, and they have been blessed with three children, Chenille, Jibreel, Kaila, and a grandson, Jre who keeps them on their toes.

Ericessen presently serves on the General Council and previously served on the Council on Ministry.



SCSC: SERVANT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

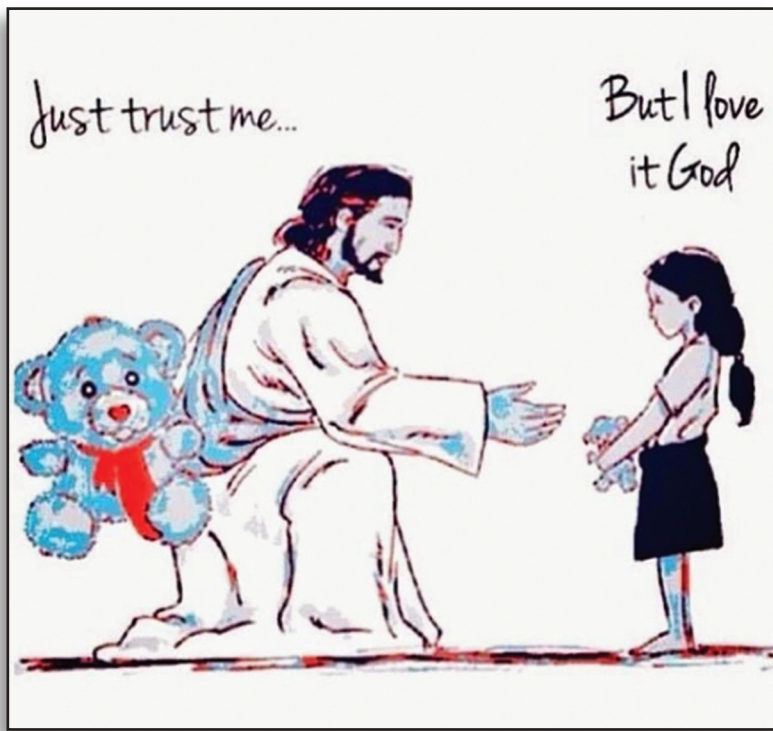
- + For baptized members of SDB churches, 18 years and up
- + Receive spiritual leadership training, experience different church cultures, practice leadership skills by serving God's people and further develop personal ministry skills
- + Grants from the Memorial Board are available to assist with post high school education programs upon successful completion of the SCSC season

2024 DATES AND INFORMATION

- January 15:** Student applications due
- February 15:** Church project applications due
- June 12-20:** Training dates (Students)
- June 13 (travel in) -16 (travel home)** for PDs at Training
- June 20-July 19:** Projects
- July 21-28:** General Conference

INFORMATION AND FORMS AVAILABLE AT:
seventhdaybaptist.org/ministries/womens-board-scsc

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Waiting Is a Gift

By Gabriela Alonzo

The scriptures make over 100 references to the concept of waiting and relates waiting to hope (Psalm 62:5), rest (Psalm 37:7), trust (Acts 1:4), seeking (Lamentations 3:25-26), and eagerness (Romans 8:23), to name a few.

When we think of waiting, we, of course, think of time. At the beginning of 2023, I purchased a planner that included a prompt on praying for a keyword and a key verse for the year. The word I received was “trust” and the verse I received was Ecclesiastes 3:11, “He has made everything beautiful in its time...” In Ecclesiastes 3, we tend to focus on verses 1-8 which outline a time for everything that occurs under heaven. I’ve started referring to this as the “I get to do” chapter, because perspective changes everything. During the work week, a dear friend of mine and I will devote at least a few minutes of our evenings to catching up with one another. Towards the beginning of the year our calls consisted mostly of complaining about our jobs, studying, and the many to-dos on our respective lists. Soon we realized that instead of encouraging each other to find the joy in our daily toils, we were in fact draining ourselves of the last ounces of joy we had left. The reality set in that we were complaining about things that others often pray for. We began encouraging each other to look at our tasks as things we *get to do*, not things we *have to do*. We get to

wake up early, we get to drive through traffic, we get to work a job that pays the bills, we get to go grocery shopping and cook, we get to study and advance our education, we get to *insert whatever daily task you can think of here*.

I won’t pretend that I always have a chipper attitude when I do these things, but changing my perspective reminds me that these tasks are gifts. In Ecclesiastes 3:9-15, titled, “The God-Given Task,” I find that waiting is related to a gift. It reads, “*What gain has the worker from his toil? I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God’s gift to man. I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him. That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God seeks what has been driven away.*”

As we wait on God’s timing, we find His gift to us is not only in receiving what we’ve prayed for but also in waiting for what we’ve prayed for. Do we realize the things we get to do while we wait? Should our perspective change from “God is *making me wait*” to “God is *allowing me to wait*”? Is there an aspect of your life that requires growth so that you are prepared to receive what you’ve been waiting for? Whether you’re praying over a job, school, relationship, illness, or whatever is on your heart, may you rejoice in the gift of waiting. May you be surrounded by others who will rejoice with you. ^{SR}

Gabriela Alonzo has recently begun serving as a trustee for the SDB Memorial Fund. She is a worship leader at the Seventh Day Baptist Christian Church (Iglesia Cristiana Bautista del Séptimo Día) in Silver Spring, MD. She has also served in the White Cloud SDB Church in White Cloud, MI. Her professional work involves legal advocacy for immigrant refugees and asylees.



By Ellie Greene



In the mid-1800s, American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow already had immense popularity. Some of his poems, like “Paul Revere’s Ride” are still memorized and quoted all over America. But despite his brilliance and success, Longfellow faced hardship and difficulty all throughout his life.

In 1861, his beloved wife, Frances, had passed away because of a tragic accidental fire. Longfellow was devastated by her death and fell deeply into depression, never fully recovering from his loss. He had difficulty writing anything original.

Then in early 1863, his eldest son Charles ran away against his father’s wishes to join the Union army, leaving in a note, “I have tried hard to resist the temptation of going without your leave but I cannot any longer. I feel it to be my first duty to do what I can for my country and I would willingly lay down my life for it if it would be of any good.”

Less than a year later, on December 1, 1863, Longfellow received word by telegram that his son had been severely wounded. Charles, the prodigal son, returned to their home in Boston alive, but possibly to never recover.

On Christmas Day of 1863, while grappling with the reality of how the Civil War had torn his country and family apart, Longfellow began to write a poem.

*I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And mild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

*And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

*Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

*Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound*

*The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

*It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

*And in despair I bowed my head;
“There is no peace on earth,” I said;
“For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!”*

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
“God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men.”*

Miraculously, Charles eventually recovered and reconciled with his father. But even today, this wartime Christmas poem still rings out a story of God’s triumph over despair, violence, and hopelessness. Parts of this poem were adapted and set to music. It is now known as the Christmas carol “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.”

On the same day he wrote this poem, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote in his journal, “How inexpressibly sad are all holidays.”

Sometimes times can be “inexpressibly sad.” Especially Christmas. It can be difficult to celebrate Christ’s birth when all around you it feels like nothing is as it should be.

Sometimes, the holidays are painful and messy. How do we make it through times like this?

From the beginning, Christmas was a mess. I don’t know if there is a scratch-and-sniff Bible out there, but if there is, I don’t think the page of Jesus’s birth would smell like pine trees, peppermint, Christmas cookies, or hot cocoa. It would smell like a dirty, stinky stable. Jesus was born in a mess.

Emmanuel. God with us. Jesus promises to be with us, even in the messiest, most painful of times.

“Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.” —Hebrews 10:23 ^{SR}



"...Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men..."

— Matthew 2:16 (ESV)

The Cry of the Innocents: Then & Now

This time each year, many Christians commemorate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. We rightly remind ourselves of the miraculous circumstances of His birth. We surround ourselves with symbols and music which remind us of the great faithfulness of God. We celebrate the fulfillment of thousands of years of prophecy. It is a joyous time for many of us—a time filled with wonder and gratitude at the lengths God has taken to make us His children and secure our eternal futures.

But one of the prophecies which Matthew says is fulfilled frequently receives less attention in the grand scheme of our celebration narrative: the so-called "slaughter of the innocents," from Matthew chapter two. Matthew reports that the wise men who came to visit Jesus after his birth visited the murderous King Herod, innocently telling him who they were looking for, unaware that Herod sought the infant Jesus to kill him. When they found Jesus, they were warned not to return to Herod but to go home a different way. Likewise, Joseph, Mary, and the infant Jesus fled to Egypt to escape Herod's wrath. When Herod realized he had been tricked and the coming King may have slipped through his fingers, threatening his own power, Herod ordered all the male children

painting: *The Massacre of the Innocents* by Léon Cogniet (1794–1880) in 1824.

around Bethlehem and the surrounding region killed. After this grisly act was completed, Matthew reports that the cries that issued from that region fulfilled a prophetic word from the prophet Jeremiah (chapter 31:15) referencing the cries of Rachel (Jacob's wife) for her children.

It may be that we deemphasize this story because it puts a damper on our celebration, but it is important that we not forget the voices of those who grieve this season, and that we do not ignore the plight of innocent children who suffer from the wrath of misguided and sinful adults in positions of power. Such things are still an unfortunate part of our world, and we should not become blind in our celebrations to those who are hurting, especially in this season of hope and expectation.

For the past several years, our Conference has been in the process of evaluating our responsibilities to children, and we have renewed our commitment to doing what we can to offer a safe environment for our children during General Conference meetings and at official General Conference events. In our contexts and in this era, that means accountability, policies and background checks. It also means raising our level of commitment and being proactive in our commitment to being a safe place for our children.

That commitment is sadly necessary, because abuse of children, sexually and otherwise, has reached epidemic levels in our nation. A study conducted by the University of New Hampshire¹ indicates that during their lifetimes based on current trends, approximately 1 in 5 young women are sexually abused before they turn 18 years of age, and 1 in 20 young men are likewise abused. The composite numbers reflect a staggering reality: nearly a third of all children are being abused before they turn 18.

Shockingly, most of these young people are abused by someone they know: only 7% of victims are abused by a complete stranger. In our culture, the innocents still cry out.

The Conference has taken many steps in the past several years, including the passage of a resolution at General Conference in 2015, which have affirmed our commitment to child protection. Since then, we have taken many steps to encourage and exhort the member churches of our Conference to take the initiative to protect the sanctity and safety of their congregations, especially their children and young people.

Safety in our congregations at this point comes in a variety of ways. As we have suggested previously in the pages of the *Recorder*, churches should...

- **...consult their insurance providers for guidance and advice**, as well as to secure appropriate coverage;
- **...have appropriate child protection policies** for their church and ministries which meet local, state and federal standards;
- **...diligently and vigilantly hold to the policies they create** and regularly review them;
- **...actively teach body safety** to our children as a way of affirming their human dignity and value;
- **...equip parents and congregations** to secure the safety of their children, including being aware of grooming and other unsafe behavior;
- **...actively report suspected abuse** or suspicious behavior to legal authorities;
- **...regularly pray for wisdom and courage in this work** even as they ask God to keep our children safe.

¹<http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/CV192.pdf>



UNEARTH THE CHURCH

By Johnmark Camenga
Conference President

I absolutely relish listening to people I know and love just rip me to shreds. Yeah! I go up to people who I respect—people with whom I have deep, life-giving relationships—and I ask them to tell me exactly what is wrong with me, and then I just sit back and take it. Then I like to agree with everything they’ve said and apologize profusely for all of my short-comings and errors. Don’t you just love doing that too?

The trajectory of unearthing the church takes us from (first) acknowledging our resistance to (second) repenting of the defense mechanisms we employ to guard our resistance to (third) being willing to hear hard things and being willing to consider that the hard things may be true.

Yes, I’m being tongue-in-cheek with that first paragraph; of course I don’t love it when people rip me to shreds. I do, however, love it when I receive constructive criticism. I could not have written that last sentence honestly a decade ago, but it is true now. Without those kinds of conversations, people would never grow or change or be transformed. Constructive criticism is one of the greatest graces we can receive, whether from people we love or from people we hardly know (Proverbs 15:31-33).

Why is it grace?

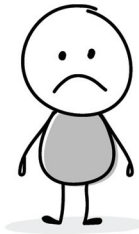
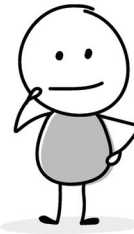
It is grace because it offers us a glimpse into how we are perceived, how we are being heard and seen and, perhaps, why we are being received or rejected. It is grace because it offers us the opportunity to identify and address the barriers that stand between us and the people in our lives, the people we

are called to serve, and the people to whom we are sent to evangelize. It is grace because it is a deeply personal point of contact that holds the potential for meaningful connection and growth.

When someone who was once part of the Church tells you they left the Church because people were so judgmental or mean or hurtful or distant, or because the whole thing just started to seem irrelevant or disconnected from their lives, your job in that moment is not to offer a defense of the Church or to explain to them how their feelings are wrong; rather, your job in that moment is to join them in their disconnect without arguing about their opinion, all the while showing them the love of Jesus.

Beyond this, it may be that their story of hurt and disconnection will shine a light on something in the Church that needs to be addressed, whether by changing or by purging. It may be that their story highlights something that we have allowed to usurp the Church’s call to love those who hate us, pray for those who persecute us, and to give to those who demand of us (Matthew 5:38-48).

We are, each of us, imperfect followers of a perfect Savior. Since we are not yet perfect, our lives should be marked by growth and learning (1 Peter 3:18) and by humility in the face of instruction and reproof (Proverbs 12:1). Two challenges of humility to consider then: let’s be humble enough to be corrected because we’re not right about everything, and let’s be humble enough to be corrected by anyone because who exactly do we think we are anyway that we can give correction and not receive it? [SR](#)



Me encanta escuchar a las personas que conozco y amo simplemente desgarrarme. ¡Sí! Me acerco a personas que respeto, personas con las que tengo relaciones profundas y llenas de vida, y les pido que me digan exactamente qué es lo que está mal conmigo, y luego simplemente me siento y lo tomo. Entonces me gusta estar de acuerdo con todo lo que han dicho y disculparme profusamente por todos mis defectos y errores. ¿No te encanta hacer eso también?

La trayectoria de desenterrar la iglesia nos lleva de (primero) reconocer nuestra resistencia a (segundo) arrepentirnos de los mecanismos de defensa que empleamos para proteger nuestra resistencia a (tercero) estar dispuestos a escuchar cosas difíciles y a considerar que esas críticas pueden ser ciertas.

Sí, estoy siendo irónico con ese primer párrafo; por supuesto que no me encanta cuando la gente me hace trizas. Sin embargo, me encanta cuando recibo críticas constructivas. No podría haber escrito esa última oración de forma honesta hace una década, pero ahora es cierto. Sin ese tipo de conversaciones, las personas nunca crecerían, cambiarían o se transformarían. La crítica constructiva es una de las mayores gracias que podemos recibir, ya sea de personas que amamos o de personas que apenas conocemos (Proverbios 15:31-33).

¿Por qué es gracia?

Es gracia porque nos ofrece una visión de cómo somos percibidos, cómo somos escuchados y vistos y, tal vez, por qué estamos siendo recibidos o rechazados. Es gracia porque nos ofrece la oportunidad de identificar y abordar las barreras que se interponen entre nosotros y las personas en nuestras vidas, las personas a las que

estamos llamados a servir y las personas a las que somos enviados a evangelizar. Es gracia porque es un punto de contacto profundamente personal que tiene el potencial de una conexión y crecimiento significativos.

Cuando alguien que una vez fue parte de la Iglesia te dice que abandonó la Iglesia porque las personas eran tan críticas o malas o hirientes o distantes o porque todo comenzó a parecer irrelevante o desconectado de sus vidas, tu trabajo en ese momento no es ofrecer una defensa de la Iglesia o explicarles cómo sus sentimientos están equivocados; más bien, tu trabajo en ese momento es unirte a ellos en su desconexión sin discutir sobre su opinión, todo el tiempo mostrándoles el amor de Jesús.

Más allá de esto, puede ser que su historia de dolor y desconexión arroje luz sobre algo en la Iglesia que debe abordarse, ya sea cambiando o purgando. Puede ser que su historia resalte algo que hemos permitido para usurpar el llamado de la Iglesia a amar a quienes nos odian, orar por quienes nos persiguen y dar a quienes nos exigen (Mateo 5:38-48).

Somos, cada uno de nosotros, seguidores imperfectos de un salvador perfecto. Dado que aún no somos perfectos, nuestras vidas deben estar marcadas por el crecimiento y el aprendizaje (1 Pedro 3:18) y por la humildad frente a la instrucción y la repreensión (Proverbios 12:1). Dos desafíos de humildad a considerar entonces: seamos lo suficientemente humildes como para ser corregidos porque no tenemos razón en todo y seamos lo suficientemente humildes como para ser corregidos por alguien porque ¿quiénes creemos que somos exactamente para poder corregir y no ser corregidos de vuelta? [SR](#)

SDB Emerging Leaders Seminar Series

By Carl Greene
Executive Director
General Conference

The first ever SDB Emerging Leaders Seminar Series took place in Janesville, WI, from October 27 to 29. Twenty young adult leaders from twelve Seventh Day Baptist Churches spent the weekend sharpening one another's call to mission in the local church, in surrounding communities, in the SDB General Conference, and to the ends of the earth.

The weekend was full of high-quality content from instructors, relationship building among participants, and leadership leveraging. What I mean by leadership leveraging has to do with who the emerging leaders are—they are already serving as leaders in the present. At the same time, they are emerging in the sense of having the capacity for increasing influence and Kingdom impact as they continue to faithfully serve God.

Simply put, we are blessed as Seventh Day Baptists to have a dynamic group of young leaders who are already leading, and poised to increase that capacity all the more.

Weekend Activities

Details and practical matters of the inaugural launch of this initiative were aptly coordinated. Miriam Berg (SDB Missionary Society Director of Advancement and Operations) shaped the weekend into an experience that drew on the strengths of the Visiting Instructors while building opportunities for participant collaboration and engagement. Jan Ehlers (SDB General Conference Administrative Assistant) drew together a host of logistics that made the weekend possible.

The content was led by Pastor Kingsley Gauti, National Youth Director of the Malawi General Conference, and Pastor Quistin Chalwe, General Secretary of the Zambia SDB Conference. These gifted instructors participated in the SDB Visiting Instructor Program this fall through a collaborative partnership between the SDB Missionary Society, the SDB Memorial Fund, the SDB Africa Bible College, and the SDB General Conference of USA and Canada. As participants in the SDB Africa Bible College, Pastor Kingsley and Pastor Quistin undertook a four-week tour of the Midwest and Southeast of the United States to preach, teach, undertake evangelism, and lead the Emerging Leaders Seminar Series. Be on the lookout for more details about the impact of their mission to the North American continent!

Over the course of the weekend seminar, the Visiting Instructors presented topics such as: how we view God, how we share God with our neighbors, how the Gospel shapes society, and how the Gospel shapes the world. We also joined the Milton SDB Church for worship Friday evening where the SDB Visiting Instructors gave a rousing presentation about the ministry underway in Africa. On Sabbath Day, we participated in Milton SDB's "Heritage Sabbath" worship service which focused on the theme of revival.





Our sessions on Sabbath day were held at the SDB Center in Janesville, WI. This was the first time that a majority of the emerging leaders had been inside the Center, which provided the added benefit of sharing our SDB missional identity that is clearly told through the stories of the SDB Museum and artifacts.

On Sunday, we met at the Milton House. This setting chronicles SDB activity in the Underground Railroad and community-shaping activity that flows from convictions. Nick Kersten (Director of Education and History) spoke about our identity as Seventh Day Baptists given this historical location. This was a springboard for the Instructors to share about how the gospel changes our society and our world when lived out.

John Pethtel (Director of Church Development and Pastoral Services) talked about how the attending emerging leaders are currently leaders and will be “emerging” throughout their lives. He provided a stirring invitation to engage all the more in the missional work of SDBs while participating in SDB leadership development opportunities.

Thank You

The Emerging Leaders Seminar Series is just that—a series of events and networking that has now launched. We are so grateful for generous ministry partners who

have given financial gifts to make this ongoing work possible.

The Rev. Alton L. and Ethel Wheeler Leadership Development Fund was created by a generous ministry partner in memory of a couple who shaped, equipped, and mobilized a significant number of SDB leaders. Just as the Wheelers disciplined and mentored many emerging leaders, the Fund will be used to prepare our current and next generations of SDB ministry leaders. What an opportunity we have in this season of ministry!

There is more great news to share. Throughout the month of October, we undertook a campaign to invite ministry partners to give financial gifts to further the work of the Fund. The financial gifts throughout the month of October were matched by the SDB Memorial Fund, dollar for dollar.

Generous givers who partnered in the work of equipping and missionally sending young SDB leaders surpassed our dream for this campaign. Over \$25,000 was given to this fund during the month of October. That means, with the Memorial Fund match, over \$50,000 has been raised for SDB Leadership Development.

Thank you for partnering in this incredible season of ministry opportunity. Thank you for continuing to invest in today and the future. [SR](#)



Africa Bible College Graduation!

SDB Missionary Society

By Andrew Samuels
Chief Executive Director

The Seventh Day Baptist Africa Bible College (ABC) was launched in 2021 as a direct response to the overwhelming appeal of many leaders from Africa for formal theological and ministry training for pastors and other church leaders.

The SDB Missionary Society initiated the program by reaching out to SDB conferences in eastern, central, and southern Africa, forming curriculum, and raising funds. With nineteen students from nine countries, the two-year home study program with periodic in-person seminars began.

The enthusiastic students, who were selected to participate by their own conferences, engaged in studies in Old Testament Survey, New Testament Survey, Systematic Theology, Hermeneutics, Homiletics, Pastoral Ministries, Evangelism/Church Planting, Worship Planning, Administration, Sabbath Theology, SDB History and Polity, and Leadership, and attended seminars in Kenya and Rwanda. Instructors for the Africa Bible College have included Johnmark Camenga, Andres Jara, Carl Greene, Garfield Miller, Miriam Berg, and Andy Samuels.

It is only by God's grace that such a program could be carried out even in the COVID-19 era. Just imagine almost twenty students traveling by plane from almost ten different countries to one location, even during the pandemic!

The student body includes three General Secretaries of SDB conferences, about ten active pastors, eighteen men, and one woman. Although all the teaching and textbooks are in English, none of the students speak English as their first language. Their conferences in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia are already benefiting from the training their students are receiving.


The in-person component of the training has facilitated the building of strong relationships and bonds among them. They are able to pray with and for each other, share praises and concerns about their respective ministries, and encourage each other in the journey of spiritual leadership.

The ABC has also helped to foster unity among Seventh Day Baptist conferences in Africa. The biblical principles and ministry approaches being taught have helped the conferences to move towards greater harmony on core matters, while embracing diversity on non-essential matters.

Two ABC students, Quistin Chalwe (Zambia) and Kingsley Gauti (Malawi), were the inaugural instructors in the Visiting Instructor Program (VIP). During October and November 2023, they spent four weeks in the United States, participating in a seminar series at regional SDB gatherings in Wisconsin and Florida. VIP, the brainchild of Rev. Dr. Carl Greene, Executive Director of the SDB General Conference of USA and Canada, is a valuable and enriching partnership between the SDB Africa Bible College and the USA & Canada SDB Conference, the SDB Memorial Board, the SDB Missionary Society, and SDB University.

We are now on the final module of the program, which is Introduction to Missions, and the diligent students will graduate on December 16, 2023. As the first class of ABC students prepares to graduate, we are planning for the next batch. Some of the graduates will become instructors, supported by current instructors. Eventually, we intend for Africans to completely assume the leadership and operation of the ABC.

More funds are needed to cover the travel and accommodation expenses for the final seminar and graduation in Rwanda in December 2023.

We appreciate your prayers and financial support for this important need. This is an exciting time for Seventh Day Baptists in Africa, and we invite you to be a part of it. Don't miss the opportunity! 

To donate, please go to www.sdbmissions.org and click Donate, choose Specific Projects, and select Africa Bible College during checkout.

Or simply scan the QR code.







The Book of Revelation: The Seven Trumpets, Part 4

Study Lesson 31 by Dennis Coleman,
Seventh Day Baptist Church of Shiloh, NJ

A lot has happened in Israel since I finished writing the last installment and I've read a few articles that draw a line between what is going on and what is prophesied in the Book of Revelation. I've been praying about it and I do not think God wants me to touch on that situation at this time, except to ask you to pray.

I also want to remind us all of what our Lord says to us about these times:

*And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled;
for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.*

Matthew 24:6 (NKJV)

Prayer Time

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your peace which You give us (John 14:27). Thank You for the wisdom You give Your children as we navigate these times in this fallen world. Please guide us as we study the Bible. Help us to understand Your will and to see Your glory as You guide Your church forward according to Your will.

The Fourth Trumpet Sounds

My family lives in the suburbs of Philadelphia, just far enough from the city that we avoid a lot of the light pollution that is generated in a major metropolitan area. As a result we can still get a clear view of the stars at night, making it fun to go outside and to simply look up. The view helps remind me of how awesome God is in that He could create the vast area that we call space.

Remember that in John's time there was no electricity, and while I suppose one could light a torch, having light shine down from the heavens was very important to the well-being of everyone living on earth. Not only did they use these "lights" to help them see what they were doing, they also used them as navigation tools, guiding them as they traveled. We see this with the wise men who, following a star, managed to show up in Bethlehem right around the time of Jesus' birth.

*The spiritual realm is real and powerful.
If you choose to ignore or deny the presence of demons,
you do so at your own risk.*

But when the fourth trumpet sounds in Revelation, a third of the sun and of the moon and of the stars are struck and mankind must live in a period where there is reduced light. It is not a time of complete darkness as there are still two-thirds of the heavenly lights, but there is a noticeable difference. Whether this points to a true physical reduction of light or a figurative reduction (such as a reduction in the ability to depend upon human wisdom), mankind is left in a period of confusion without some of the “light” which we depend on to guide our path. *Ellicott’s Commentary* points out that in this dimness there is an opportunity for the true light (God’s church) to shine and to offer hope to a misguided world. It will be a time when the world will need the city on the hill to shine at its brightest.

By the way, like with the other plagues, this one parallels an event described in Exodus. Egypt suffered a period of darkness covering the entire country except for where the people of Israel lived (Exodus 10:21-23). It was so dark that you could feel the darkness and the people of Egypt could not see each other nor could they live anything close to a normal life. I suspect that whatever form the darkness described in Revelation takes, it will have a profound effect on how people go about living day to day with a diminished capacity to reason and to “see” the path that they might choose to take.

This dimness is followed by what seems to be a slight pause in the narrative where an angel flies through the middle of Heaven. Some English translations say that this is an eagle. I don’t know that this difference is of any importance because an angel is by definition a messenger from God in any form. Some translations say that John heard this eagle/angel while others say he both heard and saw it as it flew about. The important thing is that a messenger flies over with a warning:

*“Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth,
because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the
three angels who are about to sound!”*
Revelation 8:13 (NKJV)

Things are about to get worse.

A Fallen Star

After this warning, the fifth angel blows his horn and John sees, “a star fallen from heaven to earth.” (Revelation 9:1) We know for a fact that this is not a star as we would define it because a key is given to “him.” This is some sort of living being, although the Bible does not directly tell us who he is. The fact that he has fallen seems to imply that this is not an angel of light but more likely might be something demonic,

either an evil spirit or a demon possessed person, with the goal of causing trouble on earth.

While what we are reading is a vision and while the objects seen after the previous trumpets were blown might be figurative, I think that this fallen star is a real, active and living being. I believe his appearance in scripture serves as a reminder to all Christians that there are demons and there are people who are demon possessed. The spiritual realm is real and powerful. If you choose to ignore or deny the presence of demons, you do so at your own risk.

This fallen star is given the key to the pit of the abyss, or as some versions call it, the bottomless pit. *Ellicott’s Commentary* tells us that the abyss is the most accurate translation and that it is the same word used in Luke 8:31. The context of this verse is the passage where Jesus is met by a man who is possessed by demons who call themselves “Legion” (Luke 8:26-39). When Jesus commands that Legion come out of the man, the demons begged Jesus not to command them to go into the abyss. Most likely this abyss, described by *Ellicott’s Commentary* as “the abode of the evil spirits,” is what is seen in this part of the vision.

This fallen star opens the pit and smoke comes out: smoke that is so thick that it blocks the already dimmed light of the sun, making an already dark world even darker. This likely adds to the confusion that must have been caused when the earlier trumpets sounded. And as if the smoke were not bad in and of itself, from it come locusts which are given power to torment anyone who does not have the mark of God (those who by faith have received the salvation of God). They do not harm any plants and they cannot kill anyone whom they touch, but they can bring about great pain, like the pain felt by someone who has been stung by a scorpion. The idea painted here is that these locust pack quite a punch.

I once worked with a veteran who was stung by a scorpion while serving in Vietnam. He told me that the pain he felt from this sting was not like any other he had experienced. The same can be said of the pain that will be felt by those who are stung by these locusts, but I believe the pain is emotional and spiritual, not physical. Because of this I think we need to be able to see what is going on inside a person and not just judge them by what we see on the outside. Even today there are people who look okay on the outside but are in torment on the inside. Are we willing and available to minister to their needs?

I’ll leave you to pray about that and to move as God leads. [SR](#)


The Cry of the Innocents

Continued from page 17

All of these steps are good ways to continue to work for the security, safety, and health of our children and to prevent abuse in the context of our churches, not only as we gather together, but also as we go into a broken world. That brokenness continues to reveal itself in other avenues that predators and abusers are using to harm kids, including through online means, which means we need to continue to be diligent in this work. The work of protecting our children continues to expand with the people of God.

There is one additional possible step we encourage our churches to explore. The General Conference has recently begun a relationship with the Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention (ECAP; <http://ecap.net>). ECAP was created in 2019 to provide awareness, accreditation, and resources to help Christian organizations that serve kids protect the vulnerable in ministry. In addition to becoming an affiliate of ECAP, the General Conference is seeking accreditation for the children's ministries at our sessions. ECAP provides helpful resources at their website, so we encourage SDBs to avail themselves of these resources and standards as a way of encouraging increasing ministry excellence in this important area. Those pastors who have attended Pastors' Conference, or the most recent online Pastors' Forum, should be familiar with ECAP. For additional information or to connect with ECAP, please contact Rev. John J. Pethtel.

(jpethtel@seventhdaybaptist.org)

As we move towards the new year, let us all resolve to be sure that to the extent it is possible, we do not permit harm to come to the children and youth that God has entrusted to our congregations. God saw to the protection of His Son while he was a child by giving him a family and a community to protect him. Let that be an example to us as we seek to protect, teach and love the children God gives to us! 

By Nicholas J. Kersten

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MEMORY VERSE

Month Three – 1 John 2:15-17 ESV

PRIMARY:

Do not love the world or the things in the world... but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

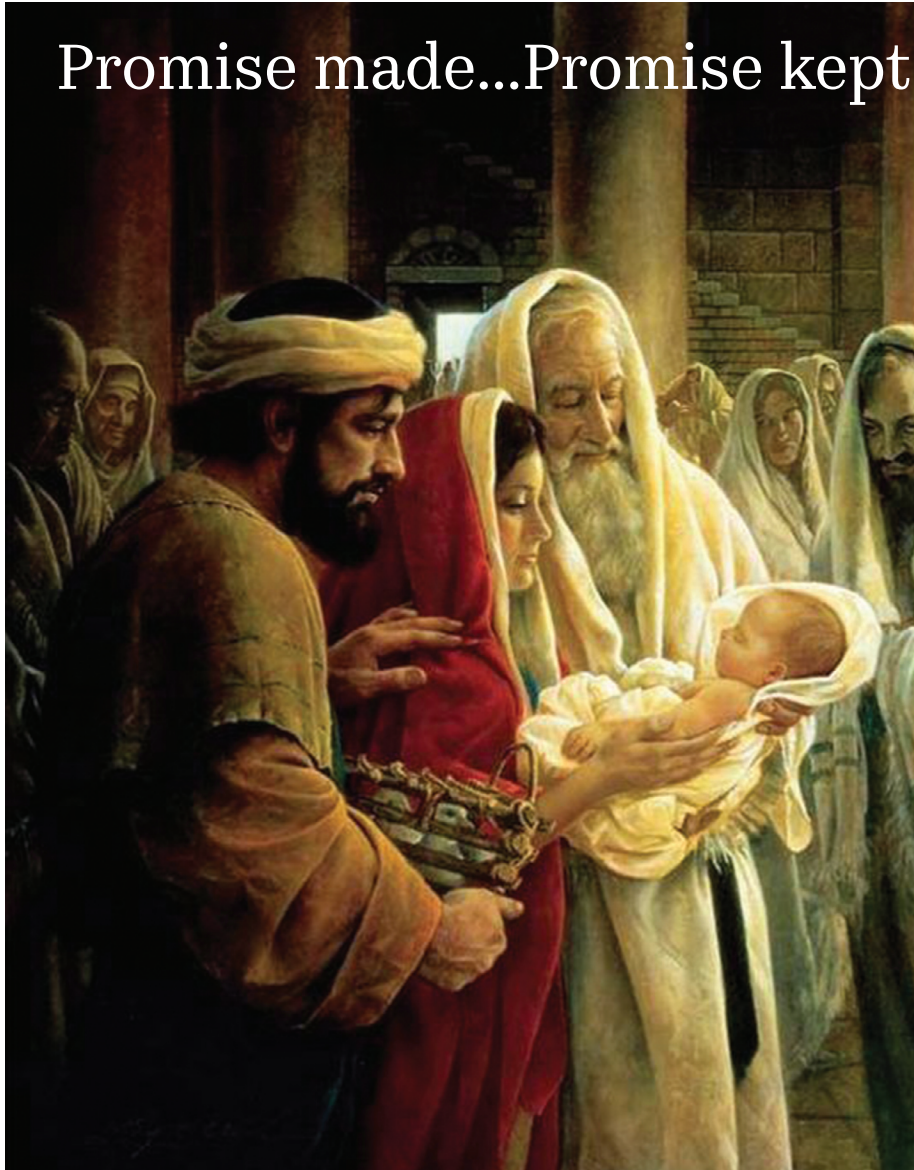
JUNIOR :

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him... And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

ADULT:

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Promise made...Promise kept



At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying,

“Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!”

Jesus' parents were amazed at what was being said about him.

—Luke 2:25-33 NLT

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God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

—I John 4:9–10 NLT