

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 5 January 2025

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 98:1-3

Opening Psalm: Psalm 8A “O LORD, Our Lord, in All the Earth”

Confession of Sin

O great and everlasting God, Who dwells in unapproachable light, Who searches and knows the thoughts and intentions of the heart; We confess that we have not loved You with all our heart, nor with all our soul, nor with all our mind, nor with all our strength; Nor our neighbors as ourselves. We have loved what we ought not to have loved; We have coveted what is not ours; We have not been content with Your provisions for us. We have complained in our hearts about our family, about our friends, about our health, about our occupations, about Your church, and about our trials. We have sought our security in those things which perish, rather than in You, the Everlasting God. Chasten, cleanse, and forgive us, through Jesus Christ, who is able for all time to save us who approach You through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for us. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Psalm 130:3-4

Psalm of Preparation: Psalm 1A “That Man is Blest”

Old Covenant Reading: Daniel 9:1-27

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 24:15-28

Sermon Title: What Lies Ahead

Hymn of Response: 383 “Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying”

Confession of Faith: Apostles Creed (p. 851)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 389 “Great God, What Do I See and Hear!”

PM Worship

279 O Christ, Our King, Creator, Lord

286 Let Us Love and Sing and Wonder

291 O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing

Old Covenant Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-17

New Covenant Reading: Hebrews 3:1-6

Sermon Title: *Partakers of a Heavenly Calling*

Extended Time of Fellowship – Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 50

Q. What does the fourth petition mean?

A. “Give us this day our daily bread” means:

Provide for all our physical needs

so that we may recognize

that you are the only source of everything good,

and that neither our care and work

nor your gifts

can do us any good without your blessing.

Therefore may we withdraw our trust from all creatures

and place it in you alone.

Suggested Preparations

Monday (12/30) Read and discuss Matthew 24:15–28

“So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

Any Christian who has pondered the centuries that have gone by since Jesus’ Eschatological Discourse will not be surprised that the Christ circles back around in His teaching to repeat His warning about eschatological confusion and false teachers. In 24:4-14, the message can be summarized as “do not be deceived by the normal tumults of the broken world.” Here that message is reiterated and intensified: “Do not believe or react to false teachers who announce My Parousia! You will know it when it happens!” I am writing in the second decade of the twenty-first century AD, and I can well remember the eschatological fervor that grew as Y2K, the year 2000, drew near. I can remember even farther back into the 1960s, as end-time speculation left its proper scriptural moorings and grew under the influence of Hal Lindsey’s *The Late Great Planet Earth*. That dispensationalist hermeneutic is still with us today through the writings of others. Some of these writers and scholars are, to be sure, Christian brothers and sisters who are simply misreading the Scriptures, especially the misreading of relationship of the NT to the OT. Others are more dangerous than that.

Jesus’ words in 24:23-28 take direct aim at the desire to predict the coming of the Son of Man in glory or to announce that He has, in fact, returned. The message is a negative one (24:23-26) and a positive one (24:27-28) – though grimly positive, I might add (“the corpses” 24:27). The negative message is simple and repeated. When anyone claims to know that the Christ has returned, do not believe the claim, and do not respond to the claimant. Even if they were to possess evident supernatural power – do not believe them. It

is as simple as that; now that Jesus has forewarned us, it should be easy to remember.

But *could* they be right? Could the Son return without you or me knowing about it? Here is the positive message in these verses: the Parousia of the Son of Man will be known to all when it happens. Jesus uses two comparisons to make this plain. The first one is obvious and readily understandable. When thunderstorms approach and the right conditions are present, dramatic lightning flares. Sometimes it strikes the ground, but sometimes it streaks across the entire sky – from the east to the west. When that happens, no one has to stop and tell you what has just happened. You know; *everyone* knows. This is how it will be at the *Parousia* of the Son of Man. *Everyone* will know. And this means that anyone who claims secret knowledge. They might be sincere and fairly harmless. More likely (as Jesus indicates with the terms “false christs” and “false prophets”), they will be dangerous to others and try to lead them astray. But do not believe them – because when it happens *everyone* will know.

Read or sing Psalm 8A “O LORD, Our Lord, in All the Earth”

Tuesday (12/31) Read and discuss Matthew 24:1-14

Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (ESV)

Commenting on verse 14, Leon Morris writes:

It is perhaps somewhat unexpected that the proclamation is to be done as *a testimony*, but we must bear in mind that throughout the New Testament the gospel is always the good news of what God has done. It is never simply a

challenge for people to do something for themselves. There is, of course, a challenge in living out the Christian life, but the essence of the gospel is what God has done in Christ. Christian salvation calls for endurance, as this passage makes abundantly clear, but in its essence it is not anything that people do. It is what God in Christ has done. The death of Jesus was to be an atoning death, a death in which He would deal with the problems of human sin and be “a ransom for man.” The proclamation of the gospel is the bearing of testimony to that great fact. And this is to be done in no minor way but *to all the nations*. The followers of Jesus must not lose sight of the fact that their Savior, during His live on earth, spoke of carrying the gospel to every nation. Christianity must always be a missionary faith.

... Jesus has foretold grievous trouble for His followers in the days ahead. But He does not let them forget the certainty of final triumph.

Read or sing Psalm 1A “That Man is Blest”

Wednesday (1/1) Read and discuss Daniel 9

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him. He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the LORD our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth. Therefore the LORD has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in all the works that he has done,

and we have not obeyed his voice. And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

“O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us. Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.”

While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the LORD my God for the holy hill of my God, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, “O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore consider the word and understand the vision.

“Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.” (ESV)

Iain Duguid writes:

Daniel was not simply praying for his own comfort and protection in the darkness. His concern was to pray for God’s people and God’s kingdom. It is right and fitting that in the darkness we take our own personal concerns before the LORD, but we should not get so swept up in our own suffering that we forget the wider needs of God’s people. It is appropriate for us to pray “Give us this day our daily bread,” but we must also remember to pray “Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Even though Daniel doubtless had many concerns and worries of his own in the first year of Darius (see Dan. 6), the need of God’s kingdom was his central

concern in his prayer in Daniel 9, that God would do what He had promised with respect to His own people.

In that task of interceding for his people, Daniel was fulfilling his calling as a prophet. We often think of intercession as a priestly task, and certainly the priests did intercede, but in the Old Testament, intercession was a central part of the prophet's role. They did not merely bring God's word to man; they also brought man's response to God by way of intercession. So in Genesis 20:7 it is the fact that Abraham is a prophet that qualifies him to intercede on behalf of Abimelech. For those of us living in the New Testament era, however, the pouring out of the Spirit on all of God's people means that we can now speak of the prophethood of all believers: we are now the ambassadors of Christ, who share in the task of bringing His message of life and death to the world around us. We therefore all share the duty and privilege of interceding for God's people and kingdom, both locally and around the world, lifting up the needs of the church and the wider world before the throne of grace.

Read or sing Hymn 383 "Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying"

Thursday (1/2) Read and discuss 2 Samuel 7:1–17

Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent." And Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you."

But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, "Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: Would you build me a house to dwell in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"' Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul,

whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David. (ESV)

Dale Ralph Davis comments:

Yahweh, true to form, promises grace on top of grace. This future grace, however, is not in response to David’s building a house/temple for Yahweh, for Yahweh has rejected that plan for now. In fact, verse 11c is Yahweh’s counter-punch to His question in 5b:

Are you to build me a house for Me to dwell in?
And Yahweh declares to you that Yahweh will make a house
for you.

David is not to be an active initiator but a passive recipient. And Yahweh obviously puts a spin on the term ‘house,’ which can mean a place with walls and a roof or a collection of people as a family or household. Yahweh graciously insists: Yahweh will be the Builder, and the house will be David’s, not *vice versa*.

Friday (1/3) Read and discuss Hebrews 3:1–6

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God’s house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope. (ESV)

John Kleinig writes:

What gives the congregation the right to speak with God in His heavenly palace and the confidence to address Him in prayer? While clearly something personal, it is also corporate in character, the common possession of the congregation. Hence the use of the inclusive “we” in 3:6; 4:16; and 10:19! Like the status of the congregation as God’s “house,” “freedom of speech” I something they can claim for themselves, something they can boast of, something they need to “hold on to” and “not throw away,” like the verbal foundation for their reliance on Christ that was given to them in Baptism. Like the key to a house, it gives them entry into the heavenly sanctuary with the right to approach God’s throne with petitions for themselves and others. Like the will of a wealthy person, it delivers a rich reward to his heirs. Most significantly, they “have” it as a gracious gift from God, one of the heavenly gifts that belong to their salvation.

The privilege of free speech in God's presence comes from what Jesus accomplished for us by His sacrificial death and also from His ongoing presence with us as our High Priest. ... His blood is, as it were, our ticket of admission. In contrast with the OT priests, who were given somewhat limited access to God at the tabernacle by the rite of ordination, in which they were washed with water and sprinkled with blood, the members of the Christian congregation have gained full access to God with complete freedom of speech by being washed with water and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus. ... Our access to heavenly Jerusalem, ... [and] our confidence in prayer, depends on Jesus and His speaking blood [12:24]. That gives us the privilege of free speech with God, as well as our confidence in speaking to Him. It gives us a good reason to hope for participation in the glory of Jesus as God's royal sons and an even better reason to boast in what we hope for.

Read or sing Hymn 389 "Great God, What Do I See and Hear!"

Saturday (1/4) Read and discuss Matthew 24:15–28

"So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. (ESV)

Jefferey Gibbs writes:

Eagles and other large birds of prey are not averse to eating carrion. When they detect a large corpse ready for consumption, they will circle or flock to land on that dead flesh. When from a distance you see this happening, you do not need to guess what is below the circling birds or underneath them as they push and jostle with each other. You see the eagles; you know a corpse is there. No one has to tell you. You know. Some have tried to read 24:28 as a metaphor, with "eagles" somehow referring to the standards of the Roman legions, but that seems unlikely. The two images (24:27 and 24:28) are parallel, and the point is the same. No one will have to tell you when the Lord returns. Do not be deceived, and do not believe the hearsay

of rumormongers and go out to find him. You will know. Everyone will know.

Prayer: Please lift up tomorrow's morning and evening worship services.