

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 21 December 2025

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 98:1-3

Opening Hymn: 313 Angels, from the Realms of Glory

Confession of Sin

Almighty God, Who are rich in mercy to all those who call upon You; Hear us as we humbly come to You confessing our sins; And imploring Your mercy and forgiveness. We have broken Your holy laws by our deeds and by our words; And by the sinful affections of our hearts. We confess before You our disobedience and ingratitude, our pride and willfulness; And all our failures and shortcomings toward You and toward fellow men. Have mercy upon us, Most merciful Father; And of Your great goodness grant that we may hereafter serve and please You in newness of life; Through the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Hebrews 4:14-16

Hymn of Preparation: 308 Good Christian Men, Rejoice

Old Covenant Reading: Isaiah 9:1-7

New Covenant Reading: Revelation 5:1-14

Sermon Title: *The Lamb Who Roars*

Hymn of Response: 311 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Confession of Faith: Ten Commandments

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 299 Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come

PM Worship

294 Song of Zechariah

300 Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

297 Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates!

Old Covenant Reading: Isaiah 7:10-24

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 1:18-25

Sermon Title: Our God is With Us

Adult Sunday School – Fellowship Lunch – No Sunday School

Suggested Preparations

Monday (12/15) Read and discuss Isaiah 9:1–7

But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.
You have multiplied the nation;

you have increased its joy;
 they rejoice before you
 as with joy at the harvest,
 as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
 For the yoke of his burden,
 and the staff for his shoulder,
 the rod of his oppressor,
 you have broken as on the day of Midian.
 For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
 and every garment rolled in blood
 will be burned as fuel for the fire.
 For to us a child is born,
 to us a son is given;
 and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
 and his name shall be called
 Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
 Of the increase of his government and of peace
 there will be no end,
 on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
 to establish it and to uphold it
 with justice and with righteousness
 from this time forth and forevermore.
 The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (ESV)

Who is Jesus? This passage is one of the Old Testament prophecies that also points forward to the doctrine of the Trinity. While we are blessed with a far fuller picture of the Triune God in the New Covenant, this prophecy should have caused faithful Jews to ask questions for which only the doctrine of the Trinity is the answer. We are told in verse 6 that “unto us a Son is given” and we are also told that He will be called “mighty God”. While the first expression distinguishes the Messiah from God the Father, the second expression identifies Him as God. This distinction of persons and unity of being within God are the essence of the doctrine of the Trinity. Yet, we also read something that can be puzzling to us today. Since Jesus was eternally the Son of God – how can Isaiah call Him the *Everlasting Father*? It is helpful for us to realize that fatherhood has three primary defining characteristics: (1) headship, (2) generation, and (3) care. Let us consider the first of these characteristics of fatherhood – *headship*. When an earthly father makes decisions, those choices impact his entire family. If one man works hard and is faithful to God while another is an adulterous, drunken, gambler – there respective families will enjoy blessings or cursings based on the actions of the family’s covenant head. Our culture tends to treat such consequences as accidental or even unfair – but they are the way God designed humanity. Unlike angels, we live in a network of relationships where we represent each other and make decisions on each other’s behalf. This is revealed even in our language. The biblical term for man/mankind is Adam. As the first man, Adam represented all mankind so when he rebelled against God – we all fell into sin and depravity with him. Western culture over the past 40 years has begun to rebel against this representative principle. For example, it is becoming increasingly common for women to not take their

husband's names (in some countries the governments have actually put impediments up that hinder a woman from taking her husband's name at the time of marriage). A far better choice would be to tell women, "If you don't like the idea of this man representing you – don't marry him!" Nevertheless, being sinners we all like to shift the blame away from ourselves – as though we would have perfectly fulfilled all righteousness if we had been in Adam's place. But before you start to protest about how unfair representative headship is, remember that this principle of representation (sometimes called "federal theology") is the only basis for your salvation (See Romans 5:12-21)! As your federal head, on the cross God treated Jesus as though he had lived your life so that through all eternity he could treat you as though you had lived His life. It is not surprising then that Christ would be described as the head of the Church (Eph 5:23; Col 1:18).

Read or sing Hymn 313 Angels, from the Realms of Glory

Tuesday (12/16) Read and discuss Exodus 1:15–22

Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, "When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live." But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and let the male children live?" The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live." (ESV)

"God dealt well with the midwives."

That phrase is pregnant with meaning. God didn't just protect them though He did that. He didn't just spare their lives though He did that too. No, the LORD dealt well with them. He blessed them. He prospered them. He gave them something precious and personal: families of their own.

In that culture, children were considered the ultimate blessing, a sign of God's favor. And these women who risked everything to save other people's children received children of their own. It is as if the LORD said, "You valued life when it was dangerous to do so. You protected My image-bearers when it cost you dearly. Now watch ... how I bless you."

This is the testimony of Scripture from beginning to end: The LORD sees. The LORD remembers. The LORD rewards.

Jesus said it this way: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

Meek is not another word for weak. The meekest man of the Exodus generation was Moses. And the meekest man in all of history is Jesus Christ our Lord. To be meek is to bow the knee to the LORD. As Jesus told His disciples: "It is My very food to do My Father's will."

This is another way of saying: The meek ... are those who Fear the LORD.

The question for us, is not whether we want to receive the rewards of the meek. Of course we do! Consider what Balaam told King Balak ... when Balak hired him to curse the people of Israel. Balaam said:

How can I curse whom God has not cursed?
How can I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?
For from the top of the crags I see him,
from the hills I behold him;
behold, a people dwelling alone,
and not counting itself among the nations!
Who can count the dust of Jacob
or number the fourth part of Israel?
Let me die the death of the upright,
and let my end be like his!"

That's what nearly everyone wants ... to "die the death of the upright" and to have an end like they do. That isn't the question that confronts us. Our question is this: Do we want to live the life of the upright of those who live in accordance with our chief end to Glorify God and to enjoy Him forever?"

Let's remember, the meek do not conquer the earth. They inherit it. The only way to receive the blessings of the LORD, to receive the abundant inheritance that He pours out on His people, is to Trust and Obey the LORD right now in the present.

Read or sing Hymn 308 Good Christian Men, Rejoice

Wednesday (12/17) Read and discuss Revelation 5

Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp,

and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying,

“Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth.”

Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice,

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might
and honor and glory and blessing!”

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.
(ESV)

In the first century, important legal scrolls were normally sealed with wax and stamped with an official seal that only authorized persons could open. The opening of such seals on a will was where the concept of “probate” originated. A very important scroll, such as the will of the Emperor, would be sealed with seven seals. The book of Revelation is using this imagery, which would have been well known to its original audience, to dramatically present the plans of God both to bless and to bring judgment upon the world. The only problem is that no-one is found worthy to open the scrolls. Don’t skip too quickly over John’s loud weeping in verse 4. If God’s plans to execute justice are never carried out – then the universe would be a fundamentally immoral and meaningless. As the Apostle Paul put it, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die (1 Corinthians 15:32).” But the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David has conquered – and was able to open the seals. Turning to see the Lion, John meets the striking image of a Lamb as though slain. This juxtaposition of images, with the Lamb as though slain being on the throne, vividly portrays how Christ’s victory came through His own death. It is as though Jesus opens the seals of His own will and the blessings which His people inherit in Him are announced – principally that we have been made a kingdom and priests to our God. Yet, this is done in such a way that the focus is not shifted from Christ to us – but to His eternal glory. Salvation is for our good, but it is for His glory.

Read or sing Hymn 311 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Thursday (12/18) Read and discuss Isaiah 7:10–24

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted. The LORD will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father’s house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria!”

In that day the LORD will whistle for the fly that is at the end of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. And they will all come and settle in the steep ravines, and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all the thornbushes, and on all the pastures.

In that day the Lord will shave with a razor that is hired beyond the River—with the king of Assyria—the head and the hair of the feet, and it will sweep away the beard also.

In that day a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep, and because of the abundance of milk that they give, he will eat curds, for everyone who is left in the land will eat curds and honey.

In that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand shekels of silver, will become briers and thorns. With bow and arrows a man will come there, for all the land will be briers and thorns. (ESV)

One time, C.S. Lewis was talking with a colleague in his study at Oxford when a group of students began singing Christmas carols outside his window. His colleague condescendingly said something like, “These are Oxford University students. Don’t they realize that virgins don’t give birth?” To which Lewis dryly replied, “Don’t you think they already know that?” Odd, isn’t it, that, having heard the Christmas story so often, people sometimes forget what a spectacular miracle the virgin conception was? Indeed, it was nothing less than a new creation of the Second Adam. Over the past two centuries many have attempted to strip the miraculous from Scripture. One place where such “scholars” seem to have gained traction is with respect to Isaiah 7:14. At first this may seem odd. Since Matthew and Luke clearly and repeatedly declare that Mary was a virgin when Jesus was conceived in her womb, what is the point of arguing that Isaiah 7:14 merely speaks of a *young woman* giving birth and not a virgin? The answer is that it is extremely embarrassing to liberals that God would promise the virgin conception seven centuries before it happened. Oddly, many conservatives have tended to take the liberals at their word and have become very tentative at suggesting that Isaiah 7:14 speaks of the virgin conception of Christ. Nevertheless, there are really strong (even compelling) reasons for holding to the traditional understanding:

1. Although liberals have repeatedly asserted that the Hebrew word '*alma*' simply means "young woman" no one has ever produced a single example in either biblical or extra-biblical Hebrew where the person referred to was not a virgin. As the Old Testament scholar J. Alec Motyer observes: "Wherever the context allows a judgment, '*alma*' is not a general term meaning 'young woman' but a specific one meaning 'virgin'."
2. The Septuagint translation of the Old Testament into Greek (done in the two centuries prior to Christ) translates '*alma*' with the Greek term *parthenon* which everyone recognizes means virgin. This is the same term used by Matthew and Luke in the New Testament to record Christ's virgin conception.
3. Matthew 1:23 quotes Isaiah 7:14 as being about the birth of Jesus.
4. Consider how dramatic a sign the LORD promises to Ahaz: "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as *Sheol* or high as heaven." As Homer Hailey put it, what is in view is "a sign so momentous that only Jehovah could give it." Then ask yourself this question: "How dramatic a sign is it that a young woman would bear a son?" The fact is, not only would a young woman bearing a son not be a particularly dramatic sign – it wouldn't be a sign at all. Young women have children the natural way all the time.
5. If we keep reading from Isaiah 7 through chapter 9 we can trace some interesting details about the child that will be born to this woman: (1) He will be called Immanuel – meaning "God with us" (7:14); (2) In 8:8 he is called Immanuel again and the Land is described as *His* (3) It is impossible to separate this child from the description in Isaiah 9:6-7 where the child is also described Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. There simply is no way that an ordinary child in Isaiah's time could have fulfilled all of this – even as a type of the Christ who was to come.

"Following these pointers, we have a sign that lives up to its promise. Heaven and earth will be truly moved. Isaiah foresaw the birth of the divine son of David and also laid the foundation for understanding the unique nature of his birth (Motyer)."

Friday (12/19) Read and discuss Matthew 1:18–25

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel”

(which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (ESV)

“What is the reason for the season?” The first half of the answer is found in the name JESUS – for He will save His people from their sins. The second half of the answer can be found in the name IMMANUEL – which means God with us.

How could a mere man save us from our sins? The answer is that he couldn’t. What the LORD requires from us is perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience. Even if the LORD created a second Adam and kept that person entirely free from sin – the best that person could have accomplished would have been to die in the place of one other sinner – and then this hypothetical second Adam would have to remain under the wrath of God for all eternity – for that is the penalty which your sins and my sins deserve.

But Jesus was not only fully man, He was also fully God. And because His Divine nature was united with His human nature, the man Christ Jesus was able to endure the just penalty for the sins of every person who would ever be saved – only to rise triumphantly over the grave – for being fully God – it was impossible that death should hold Him.

Do you now understand what is at stake in Christ’s supernatural conception by the Holy Spirit? I have heard world renowned scholars dismiss this truth as if it were no big deal. But, beloved, if Jesus were not both fully God and fully man ... you and I ... would still be under the condemnation of a perfectly Holy God.

Because God named Him “Jesus,” we know that He came for the **purpose** of saving His people from our sins.

Because He was and is “Immanuel” – God with us – we know that He has the **power** to save His people from our sins.

That is a glorious truth - but it is not an end of the good news. See, Jesus didn’t become man simply because that was what was necessary to save you from your sins – as though this was just some sort of necessary transaction *in the economy of God*. Jesus doesn’t simply save you *from* hell. Jesus saves you *for* something. Jesus saves you for Himself.

And because Jesus wanted to bring you into His family, He drew near and pitched His tent among us – as God with us. And it is *this same Jesus* who has promised ... that He will never leave you nor forsake you.

As the Prophet Isaiah foretold, “The Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and you shall call His name ‘Immanuel’.”

Read or sing Hymn 299 Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come

Saturday (12/20) Read and discuss Read and discuss Isaiah 9:1–7

But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness
 have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
 on them has light shone.
You have multiplied the nation;
 you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
 as with joy at the harvest,
 as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
For the yoke of his burden,
 and the staff for his shoulder,
 the rod of his oppressor,
 you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
 and every garment rolled in blood
 will be burned as fuel for the fire.
For to us a child is born,
 to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
 and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of peace
 there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
 to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
 from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (ESV)

King Uzziah was an exceptional ruler. This is something that should not be taken for granted either in ancient Israel or in the modern world. To be led by a wise and godly ruler is a great blessing. Furthermore, Uzziah reigned for 40 years. Most of the people living in Israel at the time of his death had never lived under another king. Now Uzziah was dead. Would Israel revert to wicked rulers or even to chaos? Would her next king try to fleece the sheep rather than protect them? Isaiah tells us that “In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.” When the earthly king was dead and gone, Isaiah saw the King of Kings who lives and reigns forever. So what? What good does it do us if there is a perfect ruler way off in a distance while we have to live with wicked rulers down here on earth? First of all the

Biblical portrait of God is of a Sovereign who is actively involved in even the apparently smallest aspects of creation – so that He cares even for the sparrows and the hairs on your head (Luke 12:6). Secondly, our passage declares the glorious news that the LORD Himself is coming down to be with us as Immanuel – which means “God with us”. Rather than history moving from bad to worse, or even in cycles, God is guiding history forward. With the coming of Christ He has established a new visible reign on earth. According to verse 7, will this righteous government be defeated by the kingdoms of this world? According to the end of verse 7, how committed is the LORD to bringing about His own righteous reign on earth? Looking around, we do not yet see everything under Christ’s righteous rule. While the Kingdom of God *has* come there are still many who love the darkness more than the light. Let us give thanks that this is not the end of the story.

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