

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 4 January 2026

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 105:1-3

Opening Psalm: 16A Preserve Me, O My God

Confession of Sin

Almighty and everlasting God, Glorious Creator of all things, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; We have sinned against Your holy Name, by failing to glorify You in our lives as your redeemed children. Our unthankfulness extends to every thought and deed, as well as to our failure to thank you with our lips. We have not lived to the praise of the glory of Your grace. We have not esteemed the reproach of Jesus Christ our Savior to be greater than the riches of this world. We have failed to estimate the infinite cost of the salvation won for us at the cross through the shed blood of Jesus. We have not been faithful to You as You have been faithful to us in all things. Father, forgive us for our ingratitude through the reconciling sacrifice of Jesus Christ our all-sufficient Mediator, we pray. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon:

Psalm of Preparation: 20B The LORD in Your Distress Attend

Old Covenant Reading: Exodus 2:1-10

New Covenant Reading: Acts 7:1-22

Sermon Title: *Man Proposes, the LORD Disposes*

Psalm of Response: 40A I Waited Long upon the LORD (1-5)

Confession of Faith: Apostles Creed (p. 851)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Psalm: 40A I Waited Long upon the LORD (6-10)

PM Worship

98B Sing to the LORD, a New Song Voicing

172 Speak, O Lord

245 Great is Thy Faithfulness

Old Covenant Reading: Number 23:19-23

New Covenant Reading: 2 Corinthians 1:15-22

Sermon Title: *Our Plans and God's Promises*

Adult Sunday School – Abraham Kuyper and Neo-Calvinism, Part I

Suggested Preparations

Monday (12/29) Read and discuss Exodus 2:1–10

Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months. When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank. And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him. Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it. When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying.

She took pity on him and said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.” Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?” And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Go.” So the girl went and called the child’s mother. And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages.” So the woman took the child and nursed him. When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, “Because,” she said, “I drew him out of the water.” (ESV)

Christopher Wright comments:

There were no chapter divisions in the original text, so we need to hear the news of Exodus 2:1 in the immediate context of 1:21. One might imagine that the brutal edict of the pharaoh would be a powerful disincentive to marriage and childbearing in the Hebrew population, but the first thing we now hear is that “a man of the house of Levi went and took a daughter of Levi and she conceived and bore a son.” She is the first of three daughters in this part of the chapter and one of the ten daughters in the whole chapter; the story of God depends on the actions of all of them.

At this point the parents are not named. Later we will find out that they are Amram and Jochebed (Exod 6:20). Here, it is their tribe that is mentioned twice, probably in order to fully credential their son as the one who will act as mediator between God and Israel and inaugurate the whole system of priestly worship performed by the Levite tribe in the tabernacle and later in the temple.

Now when Jochebed saw that she had a son, by pharaoh’s edict she should have surrendered him to the Egyptian river police. But “when she saw that he was a fine child,” she hid him instead until it was no longer possible to do so. At that point she “obeyed” pharaoh, but not quite in the way he meant. She “threw” him in the Nile, protected by her waterproofed basket.

What was she thinking? Typical of Hebrew narrative, we are not told. This feature, sometimes called “gapping,” invites readers to “fill in the gaps” with their own imagination. Commentators have not held back in offering explanations, but they all remain speculative and ought to be posed as questions, not assertions. Was she abandoning him in culpable lack of faith in God? Was it that she knew he would die one way or another (starvation or drowning) and could not bear to see it? Was it a clever hiding place, to which she planned to return for secret feeding times? Did she know that it was a place pharaoh’s daughter regularly visited for her ablutions and hoped that the child might arouse her compassion? What was it that the child’s sister was supposed to watch out for.

The point is – we cannot answer any of those questions other than with “perhaps.” But the very fact that the narrator teases us into asking them and

guessing possible answers is a powerful way of enhancing the story's power by arousing our curiosity and imagination.

Read or sing Psalm 16A Preserve Me, O My God

Tuesday (12/30) Read and discuss John 1:14–18

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; God the only Son, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known. (ESV)

Leon Morris writes:

Let us begin with the fact that John tells us that “the Word became flesh.” He is writing about One who is supremely great. He has already said that the Word was “in the beginning,” that the Word was “with God,” and that the Word “was God.” He has used “the Word” as a name for One who is as great as can possibly be imagined. There is no way of thinking of anyone or anything as being greater than the Word. The Word is true God.

But John is saying also that Jesus is true man: “The Word became flesh.” He came right where we are. He took our nature upon Him. He underwent all that being human means. He did not play at being a man. ...

John is writing about a genuine incarnation. The Word took upon Himself our flesh, with all that that means. He accepted the limitations that are part and parcel of human existence. John does not spell out what those limitations are, but his choice of word leaves the readers in no doubt about the real humanity of the Word. He became *flesh*.

Read or sing Psalm 20B The LORD in Your Distress Attend

Wednesday (12/31) Read and discuss Acts 7:1–22

And the high priest said, “Are these things so?” And Stephen said:

“Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, ‘Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.’ Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living. Yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot’s length, but promised to give it to him as a possession and to his offspring after him, though he had no child. And God spoke to this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them four

hundred years. ‘But I will judge the nation that they serve,’ said God, ‘and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.’ And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

“And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household. Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food. But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers on their first visit. And on the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph’s family became known to Pharaoh. And Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons in all. And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, he and our fathers, and they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

“But as the time of the promise drew near, which God had granted to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt until there arose over Egypt another king who did not know Joseph. He dealt shrewdly with our race and forced our fathers to expose their infants, so that they would not be kept alive. At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful in God’s sight. And he was brought up for three months in his father’s house, and when he was exposed, Pharaoh’s daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds. (ESV)

Eckhard Schnabel writes:

As Stephen is interrogated about his convictions, he responds with a long review of the history of Israel. This could be regarded as a response that fits the context, since Stephen stands before the Jewish leaders in the Sanhedrin. However, from the fact that the early Christians relied on the Old Testament as their Scriptures, and from the fact that many foundational terms, metaphors, and convictions are used in the New Testament to describe the transformative salvation that has become a reality through Jesus Christ, there is an obviously fundamental continuity between Israel and the church. When we relate this continuity to the history of Israel that Stephen summarizes in Acts 7, three basic points emerge [We will consider the first].

The revelation and salvation that characterized the history of God’s people since Abraham explain God’s revelation and salvation through Jesus and thus characterize the history of God’s people ever since. Stephen recounts Israel’s history in order to explain, among other things, the climactic fulfillment of God’s promises in Jesus, the messianic Son of Man who is the Prophet-Redeemer like Moses. The life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus is the new foundation and center of the life of God’s people – since the promises given to Abraham have been fulfilled, since the redemption effected by His death supersedes the redemption that God

provided at the time of Joseph and Moses, and since the function of the tabernacle and of the temple as places of God's presence has been absorbed by Jesus, the exalted Son of Man who works on behalf of His people from His position at the right hand of God.

But Jesus' significance cannot be properly understood if we do not understand God's promises to Abraham, God's intervention at the time of Joseph, God's redemption at the time of Moses through the exodus from Egypt, God's revelation at Mount Sinai, and God's worship in the tabernacle and in the temple. Since Jesus has a dramatically increasing number of people who follow Him and who constitute the "congregation" of God's people in the present time (both in the first century and today), they claim Israel's history as their own history. Paul's arguments in Romans 4 indicate that this is true even for Gentile Christians – Abraham is their "father" also, and God's promises to Abraham and His redemption in the exodus inform their self-understanding as the people of God just as in the case of Jewish Christians.

Read or sing Psalm 40A I Waited Long upon the LORD (1-5)

Thursday (1/1) Read and discuss Numbers 23:13–26

And Balak said to him, "Please come with me to another place, from which you may see them. You shall see only a fraction of them and shall not see them all. Then curse them for me from there." And he took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar. Balaam said to Balak, "Stand here beside your burnt offering, while I meet the LORD over there." And the LORD met Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and thus shall you speak." And he came to him, and behold, he was standing beside his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said to him, "What has the LORD spoken?" And Balaam took up his discourse and said,

"Rise, Balak, and hear;
give ear to me, O son of Zippor:
God is not man, that he should lie,
or a son of man, that he should change his mind.
Has he said, and will he not do it?
Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?
Behold, I received a command to bless:
he has blessed, and I cannot revoke it.
He has not beheld misfortune in Jacob,
nor has he seen trouble in Israel.
The LORD their God is with them,
and the shout of a king is among them.
God brings them out of Egypt
and is for them like the horns of the wild ox.
For there is no enchantment against Jacob,

no divination against Israel;
now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel,
‘What has God wrought!’
Behold, a people! As a lioness it rises up
and as a lion it lifts itself;
it does not lie down until it has devoured the prey
and drunk the blood of the slain.”

And Balak said to Balaam, “Do not curse them at all, and do not bless them at all.”
But Balaam answered Balak, “Did I not tell you, ‘All that the LORD says, that I must do’?”
(ESV)

Gerard Van Groningen writes:

Balaam’s second oracle (23:13-26) expresses even more strongly the desire of the LORD to bless Israel. Balak takes Balaam to a higher vantage point from where he can see another part of Israel. The sacrificial ritual is followed once again. Balaam again goes apart, as a diviner, to look for an omen. Upon his return, Balak is eager to know if the LORD has spoken. Balaam tells Balak the following: (1) God is truth. He is unchangeable and thus faithful to Himself and His word of truth. He is not to be compared with man. (2) The word of the LORD will not be revoked according to any man’s desire. In fact, man is totally incompetent to alter the word or work of God. (3) The people of Israel have been redeemed by the LORD from Egypt. He has made them a royal nation. He has made them strong and invincible. They have not done anything that would warrant the LORD’s curse. (4) Israel as a nation was brought forth by a miracle performed by God Himself. This makes Israel comparable to the lion and the lioness, the regal creatures of the animal world. Israel is victorious and invincible. Balak’s response to the message is for Balaam to say nothing; if he cannot curse them, he should at least refrain from blessing them. Balaam protests that he is not free to do as Balak orders.

Friday (1/2) Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 1:15–22

Because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a second experience of grace. I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way to Judea. Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say “Yes, yes” and “No, no” at the same time? As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. (ESV)

James Davis writes:

It appeared [at least to some of the Corinthians] as though Paul was at best not truly concerned with his relationship to [their] church, and at worst a fickle person who made promises “lightly” and constantly went back on his word.

Once more Paul meets this obstacle to reconciliation squarely and clarifies the reasons for his conduct by relating his conduct to the conviction he shares with the Corinthians concerning God’s faithfulness. Christ was preached with consistency by Paul, by Silas, and by Timothy in such a way as to emphasize that all God’s promises were faithfully fulfilled in Him. No matter their number, or the length of time taken in mercy to bring them to fulfillment, or the manner, expected or unexpected, of their fulfillment, the eventual fulfillment of God’s promises demonstrates His glorious faithfulness.. Upon this kind of faithfulness, betokened especially in the receipt of the Holy Spirit, those who are in Christ place their hope for what is yet to come.

Read or sing Psalm 40A I Waited Long upon the LORD (6-10)

Saturday (12/27) Read and discuss Read and discuss Exodus 2:1–10

Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months. When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank. And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him. Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it. When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.” Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?” And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Go.” So the girl went and called the child’s mother. And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages.” So the woman took the child and nursed him. When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, “Because,” she said, “I drew him out of the water.” (ESV)

Doug Stuart writes:

Although this portion of the overall narrative features Moses, it is also the story of how God used three women to save a baby from death. It features two mothers and two daughters, with the daughter of Pharaoh in two roles, initially that of daughter and eventually also of adoptive mother. Moses’ biological mother also figures prominently in these events as the one who not only did everything she could to preserve the life of her child, but also as the woman who ended up being able to nurse and thus substantially rear

her own little boy. The final major figure is this woman's daughter, that is, Moses' sister, who will be identified later as Miriam, one of the leaders of the exodus. Miriam's oversight of Moses as he floated among the rushes of the Nile and her quick thinking in proposing an Israelite nurse of the baby (knowing full well that she would "recruit" his own mother) helped preserve Moses for her family and for Israel's salvation. The motives of all these women appear to have been pure and appropriate. God used them to do what they were good at and what their culture especially honored in women: preserving and raising a child. Their faithfulness to that noble role parallels in no small degree the faithfulness of the Israelite midwives to theirs as described in the prior chapter. In each instance children were preserved from the death the pharaoh had decreed by women who defied his repugnant command. Pharaoh's daughter could do so by reason of her privileged status; Moses' mother and sister, by reason of their wit and fortitude and – though it is only implicit at this point in the narrative – their faith.

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