

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 19 April 2026

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 100:1-5

Opening Psalm: 93 The LORD Reigns over All

Confession of Sin

O eternal God and merciful Father, we humble ourselves before your great majesty, against which we have frequently and grievously sinned. We acknowledge that we deserve nothing less than eternal death, that we are unclean before you and children of wrath. We continually transgress your commandments, failing to do what you have commanded, and doing that which you have expressly forbidden. We acknowledge our waywardness, and are heartily sorry for all our sins. We are not worthy to be called your children, nor to lift up our eyes heavenward to you in prayer. Nevertheless, O Lord God and gracious Father, we know that your mercy toward those who turn to you is infinite; and so we take courage to call upon you, trusting in our Mediator Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Forgive all our sins for Christ's sake. Cover us with his innocence and righteousness, for the glory of your name. Deliver our understanding from all blindness, and our hearts from all willfulness and rebellion, we pray through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. *Amen*

Assurance of Pardon: Romans 1:16-17

Hymn of Preparation: 253 God, All Nature Sings Thy Glory

Old Covenant Reading: Exodus 7:14-25

New Covenant Reading: Revelation 8:1-11

Sermon Title: *Yahweh: Lord of the Nile*

Psalm of Response: 46C God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength

Confession of Faith: 1 Heidelberg Catechism (p. 872)

Doxology (Hymn 569)

Closing Hymn: 340 There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood

PM Worship

24B The Earth and Its Riches

395 O Breath of Life, Come Sweeping through Us

537 Jesus, Master, Whose I Am

Old Covenant Reading: Ezekiel 11:14-25

New Covenant Reading: 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

Sermon Title: *We Are The Temple*

Adult Sunday School – The Church as a Body

Suggested Preparations

Monday (4/20) Read and discuss Read and discuss Exodus 7:14–25

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water, and stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him. Take in your hand the staff that turned into a serpent. And you shall say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, “Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness.” But so far, you have not obeyed. Thus says the LORD, “By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood. The fish in the Nile shall die, and the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will grow weary of drinking water from the Nile.”’” And the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood, and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.’”

Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood. And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh’s heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart. And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink the water of the Nile.

Christopher Wright comments:

God had mentioned this water-to-blood transformation in a small way back at the burning bush, but the idea then was just to pour some Nile water on the ground and see it become blood. This was far more comprehensive. The Nile itself, and then all Egypt’s stored drinking water, is turned to blood by the power of Aaron’s staff.

The Egyptian magicians, however, find some unbloodied water that they manage to turn to blood – when one might have thought they would have been better occupied finding “secret arts” that could turn blood back to water again. They could imitate but not reverse the actions of God.

And Pharaoh? Apart from the implied thought, “Anything you guys can do, my guys can do the same,” this tyrant is so unaffected by the attack on his own people’s water supply and their thirsty revulsion that he can retreat to his palace (for a glass of wine?) while they have to dig for any drinkable dregs they can discover.

Seven full days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile. (ESV)

Read or sing Psalm 93 The LORD Reigns over All

Tuesday (4/21) Read and discuss Exodus 7:8–13

Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “When Pharaoh says to you, ‘Prove yourselves by working a miracle,’ then you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.’” So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs. Still Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. (ESV)

What is going on with Pharaoh here? He asked Moses and Aaron for a sign and they gave him one. His wise men tried to duplicate the sign but Aaron's staff ate their staffs. We naturally think of this in terms of snakes eating snakes but notice that the passage says ... Aaron's staff swallowed their staffs. The point isn't that one snake was more powerful than the other snakes. This is a supernatural action which demonstrates the superiority of the God of Israel over whatever occult forces the Egyptians might draw upon. This was not a tie-game. Yahweh had demonstrated, in a way that had not yet caused any harm to Egypt, that He is the One who is in charge and Pharaoh refuses to take the LORD at His word.

Why?

As Paul Simon once put it: “Still man hears what he wants to hear ... and disregards the rest.”

Pharaoh didn't want to let Israel go. So he latches on to anything he can any foothold, any ambiguity, any scrap of rival evidence to stubbornly resist what the LORD is telling him. This is what psychologists call confirmation bias: starting with a conclusion and then collecting evidence that supports it, while discarding everything else.

Pharaoh's wise men duplicated the early signs. Never mind that Aaron's staff swallowed theirs. Never mind that the gap between what God did and what the Egyptian wise men could do would widen with every plague until even the wise men would be forced to declare that **this** is the finger of God. Pharaoh had decided that he would not let Israel go and his heart grabbed onto any evidence that allowed him to maintain that position.

This is one of the most chilling features of human nature. We think we are evaluating evidence. We think we are reasoning carefully. But in reality, when our hearts have already decided what we want, our minds become very skilled attorneys working to build the case that our hearts have already decided upon.

This is why the Bible so consistently connects our thinking with our loves. Jesus said that those who love the darkness will not come to the light, lest their deeds be exposed. It is not primarily an intellectual failure that keeps people from God. It is a moral one. It is a problem of the heart.

Read or sing Hymn 253 God, All Nature Sings Thy Glory

Wednesday (4/22) Read and discuss Revelation 8:1–11

When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter. (ESV)

Walter Elwell writes:

As the seventh seal is broken, an ominous silence settles in across the realms of heaven. The tumultuous noise of angels' praise, elders' songs, and living creatures' words has now ceased in anticipation of what is soon to take place. The Silence is of a relatively short duration, about half an hour, during which time John waits to see what it all portends. The broken seal unfolds into a new set of visions, this time seven trumpets. Some scholars discuss whether the events depicted by the seven trumpets follow sequentially upon the six opened seals, or whether, as is more probable, they run parallel to them, so that the seals, trumpets, and bowls (to come later) are all broadly descriptive of the same period of time. Before the trumpets sound another vision crowds in upon John's sight. An angel appears in a scene reminiscent of temple worship, with a censer to be filled with incense, lit with fire from the golden altar and hurled to the earth in the midst of shattering noise, which presumably broke the half-hour silence. This is reminiscent of the

scene at Mount Sinai when God spoke with Moses and the people in the midst of trumpet blasts, thunder, smoke, and fire. In Revelation 5:8 the incense is the prayers of the saints; here in 8:3-5 the incense accompanies the prayers of the saints, but the image is still the same. It is a sacrifice of sweet smell in the courts of heaven. The altar is the same one the martyrs are under and perhaps their cry “How long?” is the prayer that now ascends with the smoke and is cast back upon the earth as an answer, in judgment, upon the evil deeds of men who murdered God’s servants.

Read or sing Psalm 46C God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength

Thursday (4/23) Read and discuss Ezekiel 11:14–25

And the word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, your brothers, even your brothers, your kinsmen, the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those of whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, ‘Go far from the LORD; to us this land is given for a possession.’ Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: Though I removed them far off among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a while in the countries where they have gone.’ Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.’ And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their deeds upon their own heads, declares the Lord GOD.”

Then the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them. And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain that is on the east side of the city. And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in the vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to the exiles. Then the vision that I had seen went up from me. And I told the exiles all the things that the LORD had shown me. (ESV)

Victor Hamilton writes:

God is not far away from the deportees. On the contrary, He has been a sanctuary for them even in their banishment. There is a wall around Jerusalem, but it is no wall that confines the LORD and restricts His movement. Even years of incarceration in Babylon can be as full of the glory of the LORD if He is there.

When the exiles are brought back to their homeland they will eradicate idolatry. Follong what they will do (v. 18) is what God will do for them (v. 19), and again what they will do (v. 20). God will give an undivided heart and a new spirit. In other words, not only will there be a geographical change, but there will be a spiritual change as well, resulting in new obedience. God will transform both their outer and inner circumstances.

In chapter 10 the divine glory leaves the temple. In chapter 11 the divine glory leaves the city. The temple has been abandoned, and now the city has been abandoned. With the presence of God both have lost the real reason for their existence. The temple is but a building and the city is but a site. It is no without significance that the vision of the divine exit follows the promise of return. Does this suggest that God is leaving to join those in exile? Interestingly, the divine glory stops above the mountain east of Jerusalem (v. 23) – the Mount of Olives. God does not depart the city in a huff or in a rage, but, to use an anthropomorphism, with tears in His eyes.

Friday (4/24) Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,

“I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.

Therefore go out from their midst,
and be separate from them, says the Lord,
and touch no unclean thing;
then I will welcome you,
and I will be a father to you,
and you shall be sons and daughters to me,
says the Lord Almighty.”

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. (ESV)

David Garland writes:

We can only surmise what happened. When Paul was present, he denounced anything associated with idols. After he left, the more prominent members of the congregation would be strongly tempted to eat idol food because of social pressure. They buckled under this pressure and justified it with an “enlightened” view f Christian freedom. Carter points out, “It is evident that

those who had contact with the outside world through their attendance at idol feasts, or their use of the law courts and prostitutes, neither shared the apostle's concern about the boundaries of the community, nor his rejection of city life outside those boundaries." They were seeking their own social good and then justifying it theologically, unconcerned about what effect it might have on others. Like stubborn teenagers who may challenge the limits placed on them by their parents, these Corinthians contested Paul's prohibitions. In 1 Corinthians 8-10 Paul responds to their rebuttal and tries to persuade them by other means. He may seem to agree with them in principle but then points out to them the error of their application of the principles. He is primarily interested in strengthening their Christian identity and social unity, which requires maintaining the boundaries that set the church of God apart from the surrounding society. Their holiness as "saints" set apart of God requires avoiding anything that plainly smacks of idolatry no matter how unreasonable, inconvenient, or unsociable such withdrawal might seem to them.

Read or sing Hymn 340 There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood

Saturday (4/25) Read and discuss Exodus 7:14–25

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water, and stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him. Take in your hand the staff that turned into a serpent. And you shall say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, "Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness." But so far, you have not obeyed. Thus says the LORD, "By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood. The fish in the Nile shall die, and the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will grow weary of drinking water from the Nile."'" And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood, and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.'"

Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood. And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart. And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink the water of the Nile.

Doug Stuart writes:

It is ... likely that what was meant by the statement “the Egyptian magicians did the same things by their secret arts” was that the magicians were able to duplicate on a small scale, by simple trickery, the changing of water into reddish water. Such a duplication (or, more technically, imitation) would have required only to add something that would dye some water red through slight of hand. It is noteworthy that the magicians did not attempt to undo the havoc wrought upon the Nile or other large bodies of water – for the obvious reason that they could not do so. But the work of the magicians had its effect on Pharaoh. He could comfort himself with the thought that somehow the trickery of Moses and Aaron (or the power of their God, if he thought that it was real divine power by which his magicians worked) was simply the same sort of thing his people could do, and on short notice at that. Thus, as with the changing of Aaron’s staff into a snake, magic undermined the credibility of reality, and Pharaoh had an excuse to yield nothing to the Israelites and the demands of their God. The only thing Pharaoh had lost in this encounter was the opportunity to have his bath.

The Egyptian people, however, had to scramble to get water, which was available only from new wells. Subsurface water had not been affected; the miracle of the first plague was limited in its lethality to fish – people were merely greatly inconvenienced. Nevertheless, the superiority of Israel’s God to the go of the Nile was obvious. Verse 24 provides a postscript similar to that which accompanied the account of the staff-to-snake miracle, the purpose of which was to clarify that what the magicians could do was limited. In the case of the staff-to-snake miracle, they could imitate one aspect of the miracle, but they could not duplicate the superior snake. In the case of the water-to-blood miracle, they could imitate the changing clear water to red water, but they could not reverse the curse, so the general population suffered. What Moses and Aaron had done was no trick; anyone desperately digging a well to get pure water knew that.

Seven full days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile. (ESV)

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