

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 26 October 2025

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 100:1-5

Opening Hymn: 219 “O Worship the King”

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: Ephesians 2:13-16

Psalm of Preparation: Psalm 2A “Why Do Heathen Nations Rage?”

Old Covenant Reading: Esther 1:12-22

New Covenant Reading: Revelation 18:1-24

Sermon Title: *The Evil Empire*

Hymn of Response: 244 “A Mighty Fortress is Our God”

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

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 411 “Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns”

PM Worship

103A Bless the LORD, My Would

237 When All Your Mercies, O My God

245 Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Old Covenant Reading: Hosea 11:1-11

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 2:1-15

Sermon Title: *Out of Egypt*

Adult Sunday School – B.B. Warfield – Ben Richards teaching

Suggested Preparations

Monday (10/20) Read and discuss Esther 1:12–22

But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s command delivered by the eunuchs. At this the king became enraged, and his anger burned within him.

Then the king said to the wise men who knew the times (for this was the king's procedure toward all who were versed in law and judgment, the men next to him being Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who saw the king's face, and sat first in the kingdom): "According to the law, what is to be done to Queen Vashti, because she has not performed the command of King Ahasuerus delivered by the eunuchs?" Then Memucan said in the presence of the king and the officials, "Not only against the king has Queen Vashti done wrong, but also against all the officials and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. For the queen's behavior will be made known to all women, causing them to look at their husbands with contempt, since they will say, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, and she did not come.' This very day the noble women of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's behavior will say the same to all the king's officials, and there will be contempt and wrath in plenty. If it please the king, let a royal order go out from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be repealed, that Vashti is never again to come before King Ahasuerus. And let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. So when the decree made by the king is proclaimed throughout all his kingdom, for it is vast, all women will give honor to their husbands, high and low alike." This advice pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Memucan proposed. He sent letters to all the royal provinces, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language, that every man be master in his own household and speak according to the language of his people. (ESV)

R.K. Harrison writes:

The book of Esther, which narrates certain incidents in the court of the Persian monarch Ahasuerus relating to the deliverance of the Jews from persecution, furnishes the reason for the institution of the feast of Purim. This fascinating story is one of the most dramatic in the Old Testament, reflecting as it does the passions, luxury, intrigue, and the political and social organization of the Persian regime, in addition to demonstrating something of the vitality that characterized the Jewish colonists of the Persian period.

The book opened with an account of a sumptuous banquet given by King Ahasuerus for all the dignitaries of the Persian empire. When the queen disobeyed the royal command to appear before the guests and display her beauty, she was deposed for insubordination. A decree was subsequently promulgated throughout the empire enforcing the submission of wives to their husbands, which followed ancient Semitic tradition. As a replacement for Vashti, the deposed queen, the king married the winner of what at the present day would be designated as a "beauty contest." The successful lady, named Esther when given her official Persian title as queen, or Hadassah, the Hebrew "myrtle," had been brought up in Susa by her cousin Mordecai, a Benjamite descendant of Kish, the father of King Saul. ... In contrast to Daniel, Esther concealed her Jewish religion and nationality, and in the tenth of month of the seventh year, some four years after the deposition of

Vashti, she became queen, an occasion that was celebrated by means of a great banquet.

Read or sing Hymn 219 “O Worship the King”

Tuesday (10/21) Read and discuss Hebrews 13:7–15

Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. (ESV)

Verse 15 tells us:

Through Him then ... let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God,
that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name.

We no longer sacrifice animals to the LORD. Now that Christ has come, our sacrifice is a sacrifice of praise. It is the "fruit of lips that acknowledge His name."

There are three key things to see in this verse:

1. First, we are called to offer this sacrifice of praise *to God*. We are not organizing our worship to satisfy the personal tastes of our culture nor of the worshippers. Our worship ascends to God. It's for **His** glory, **His** pleasure, and **His** honor.
2. Second, this sacrifice of praise is offered “through Him” that is “through Christ.” We do not come to God directly on our own merit. We come through the Mediator. We come through the one who opened the new and living way for us. We come through the One who has sanctified us by His blood.
3. Third, worship involves a surprising paradox. Although we offer our praise to God for His glory, His pleasure, and His honor it is only by worshipping the LORD that our own souls are fully satisfied. Here is the final reason why loyalty to Christ is better than loving the world: **Worship of Christ satisfies the deepest purpose of human existence.** We were made to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. The world cannot offer you that. No amount of success, wealth, fame, or pleasure can fulfill the purpose for which you were created. Only in worship in Christ-centered, sacrificial worship, will we ever find our fullest satisfaction.

Read or sing Psalm 2A “Why Do Heathen Nations Rage?”

Wednesday (10/22) Read and discuss Revelation 18

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. And he called out with a mighty voice,

“Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!
She has become a dwelling place for demons,
a haunt for every unclean spirit,
a haunt for every unclean bird,
a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.
For all nations have drunk
the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality,
and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her,
and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her
luxurious living.”

Then I heard another voice from heaven saying,

“Come out of her, my people,
lest you take part in her sins,
lest you share in her plagues;
for her sins are heaped high as heaven,
and God has remembered her iniquities.
Pay her back as she herself has paid back others,
and repay her double for her deeds;
mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed.
As she glorified herself and lived in luxury,
so give her a like measure of torment and mourning,
since in her heart she says,
‘I sit as a queen,
I am no widow,
and mourning I shall never see.’
For this reason her plagues will come in a single day,
death and mourning and famine,
and she will be burned up with fire;
for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.”

And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say,

“Alas! Alas! You great city,
you mighty city, Babylon!
For in a single hour your judgment has come.”

And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, cargo of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls.

“The fruit for which your soul longed
has gone from you,
and all your delicacies and your splendors
are lost to you,
never to be found again!”

The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud,

“Alas, alas, for the great city
that was clothed in fine linen,
in purple and scarlet,
adorned with gold,
with jewels, and with pearls!
For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste.”

And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning,

“What city was like the great city?”

And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out,

“Alas, alas, for the great city
where all who had ships at sea
grew rich by her wealth!
For in a single hour she has been laid waste.
Rejoice over her, O heaven,
and you saints and apostles and prophets,
for God has given judgment for you against her!”

Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying,

“So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence,
and will be found no more;
and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters,
will be heard in you no more,
and a craftsman of any craft
will be found in you no more,
and the sound of the mill

will be heard in you no more,
and the light of a lamp
will shine in you no more,
and the voice of bridegroom and bride
will be heard in you no more,
for your merchants were the great ones of the earth,
and all nations were deceived by your sorcery.
And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints,
and of all who have been slain on earth.” (ESV)

Tom Wright comments:

We smelt it before we saw it: a sour, bitter stench which seemed to cling to the nostrils. We looked at one another and ran outside. There, about a mile away, but with a gentle wind carrying it in our direction, was a cloud of thick, grey-black smoke, rising above the trees, hanging in mid-air. As we listened, we could even hear the noise of crackling.

Soon a crowd gathered. It was the old mill at the bottom of the road. Still half-full of bales of wool, it had caught light. Soon, on that bright Friday morning, it was beyond rescue. Never again would anyone make anything there. For days afterwards, despite the fire brigade’s energetic hosing, there were still smoldering remains, still the sour smell in the air.

Now multiply a building in a country lane by a million; and, instead of an old woolen mill, imagine a city with every kind of building and every kind of trade. Cities develop their own life, as complex as a human body. Every part links up with every other part: an elaborate interlocking network of trade and travel, of manufacture and communication. When you work there, there is so much you take for granted: this shop on this corner, that factor down that street, this temple, that restaurant, these streets leading to those homes, and schools, and markets.

Suddenly, in an hour, it is all gone (verses 10, 17). The long lament of the kings and the merchants in which John has drawn together material from Isaiah 23 and Ezekiel 27, is as much a lament about the sudden speed of Babylon’s downfall as about the lost opportunities for trading, great though that loss is. Those who remember one or other of the great stock market crashes will know that sense, systems that you could, literally bank on have suddenly collapsed. ...

John does not say that the gold, silver, precious stones and the rest were bad things which nobody should have celebrated in the first place. Interestingly, many of them find an honored place in the New Jerusalem of chapter 21. Rome was able to bring all of these fine commodities, listed in verses 12-14, from the ends of the earth. Among the things John mentions are goods

that would have come from India, China, and Africa, as well as Arabia, Armenia, and beyond. This was truly a worldwide trade.

But the giveaway point comes at the end of verse 13, John has built up a marvelous catalog of luxury goods as well as the basics of trade – flour, wheat, cattle, and so on. But then, right at the end, we find the horror. Among the goods are bodies – yes, human lives. When you worship idols, the idols demand sacrifices. When you worship Mammon the money-god or Mars the war-god; or Aphrodite the sex-goddess, they will demand sacrifices all right. And some of those sacrifices will be human. Here in the middle of this lament over Babylon, we find one of the many places in the New Testament where a small but significant note of implacable protest is raised against the entire system upon which the ancient world was built. Slavery – the buying, selling, using and abusing of human beings as though they were on par with gold and silver, ivory and marble. ...

And yet John believed in the God of the Exodus, the God who sets slaves free. A huge amount of his book, ..., was built up on the basis of what God did in Egypt he will do again, this time on a cosmic scale.

Read or sing Hymn 244 “A Mighty Fortress is Our God”

Thursday (10/23) Read and discuss Hosea 11:1–11

When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.
The more they were called,
the more they went away;
they kept sacrificing to the Baals
and burning offerings to idols.

Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk;
I took them up by their arms,
but they did not know that I healed them.
I led them with cords of kindness,
with the bands of love,
and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws,
and I bent down to them and fed them.

They shall not return to the land of Egypt,
but Assyria shall be their king,
because they have refused to return to me.
The sword shall rage against their cities,
consume the bars of their gates,
and devour them because of their own counsels.
My people are bent on turning away from me,
and though they call out to the Most High,

he shall not raise them up at all.

How can I give you up, O Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, O Israel?
How can I make you like Admah?
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?
My heart recoils within me;
my compassion grows warm and tender.
I will not execute my burning anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim;
for I am God and not a man,
the Holy One in your midst,
and I will not come in wrath.

They shall go after the LORD;
he will roar like a lion;
when he roars,
his children shall come trembling from the west;
they shall come trembling like birds from Egypt,
and like doves from the land of Assyria,
and I will return them to their homes, declares the LORD. (ESV)

Derek Kidner writes:

This chapter is one of the boldest in the Old Testament – indeed in the whole Bible – in exposing to us the mind and heart of God in human terms. We are always in danger of thinking of divine majesty in terms we have learnt from earthly potentates, ‘the kings of the Gentiles’ whom our Lord summed up in Luke 22:25-27 in contrast to Himself. Even when we speak of God as Father we may hesitate in case we read too much into the word. But our chief danger is in reading too little from it, drawing our ideas either from an earthly father’s indulgence, caring too little of his children’s training, or from his self-indulgence, taking the convenient path of a domestic tyrant.

Here, by contrast, we are made to see this title in terms of accepted cost and anguish. God as a father rebuffed, torn between agonizing alternatives, may seem too human altogether; but this is the price of bringing home to us the fact that divine love is more, not less, ardent and vulnerable than ours. ‘For I am God, and not a man.’ Once more, as in chapter 3, it is He, not we, who sets the pace and who stays the course against every discouragement and provocation that ingratitude can offer.

Friday (10/24) Read and discuss Matthew 2:1–15

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” When Herod

the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

““And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.””

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.” (ESV)

The chief priest and the scribes were at opposite ends of the theological spectrum. The scribes were the conservatives who were committed to the letter of Scripture and to preserving traditional Jewish culture. Most of chief priests were Sadducees. The Sadducees were the affluent ruling class in Israel. They were far more willing than most Jews to accommodate Rome – indeed the office of High Priest was frequently purchased from their Roman overlords. Yet, **both groups** knew the answer to Herod’s question. In fact, his question was as simple as asking an OPC minister to answer, “What is the chief end of man?” Where was the Christ to be born? The answer rolled right off the tongue – in Bethlehem. In fact, they all knew the specific Scripture verse from Micah.

““And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd My people - Israel.””

I picture them almost expecting Herod to pat them on the head and say good job. They were anxious about Herod – but he had simply asked them an easy question – and they all knew the right answer. Things were going far better than they had hoped.

Except, do you notice what the scribes and chief priests do next? What do the scribes and chief priests do after the tell Herod where the Messiah was to be born? ... **They ... don't ... do ... anything!** Bethlehem is just five or six miles outside of Jerusalem. I've never been there, but I understand that you can see Bethlehem from Jerusalem – and not one of the chief priests or scribes makes the journey with the wise men. Not one of them!

Here is the response that may be more appalling than anger. The religious and civic leaders of Israel were apathetic about the things of God.

Let that be a warning to us. As J.C. Ryle warns us: “It is possible to have Scripture in our heads with no love of God in our hearts. These verses show us that it is not always those who have [the] most religious privileges, who give Christ [the] most honor. We might have thought that the scribes and the Pharisees would have been the first to [run] to Bethlehem, on the slightest rumor that the Savior was born. But it was not so. A few unknown strangers from a distant land, [along with the despised shepherds mentioned by Luke] were the first”¹ to seek Jesus, they were the first to find Jesus, and they were the first to worship Jesus.

Read or sing Hymn 411 “Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns”

Saturday (10/25) Read and discuss Esther 1:12–22

But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. At this the king became enraged, and his anger burned within him.

Then the king said to the wise men who knew the times (for this was the king's procedure toward all who were versed in law and judgment, the men next to him being Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who saw the king's face, and sat first in the kingdom): “According to the law, what is to be done to Queen Vashti, because she has not performed the command of King Ahasuerus delivered by the eunuchs?” Then Memucan said in the presence of the king and the officials, “Not only against the king has Queen Vashti done wrong, but also against all the officials and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. For the queen's behavior will be made known to all women, causing them to look at their husbands with contempt, since they will say, ‘King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, and she did not come.’ This very day the noble women of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's behavior will say the same to all the king's officials, and there will be contempt and wrath in plenty. If it please the king, let a royal order go out from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be repealed, that Vashti is never again to come before King Ahasuerus. And let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. So when the decree made by the king is proclaimed throughout all his kingdom, for it is vast, all women will give honor to their husbands, high and low alike.” This advice pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Memucan proposed. He sent letters to all the royal provinces, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language, that every man be master in his own household and speak according to the language of his people. (ESV)

¹ J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on Matthew*, pp. 10-11.

Stephen Noll writes:

“I am Xerxes, the great king of kings, king in this great earth far and wide.” This inscription is no empty boast by the Persian king known in the Bible as Ahasuerus (485-465 B.C.). Xerxes reigned over 127 provinces from his royal throne in Susa. Persia was a kingdom at rest, secure in its power. The luxuriousness of the Persian court was renowned, far surpassing that of Solomon’s. We today can glimpse something of the grandeur of Xerxes court from the excavated remains of his later capital at Persepolis.

In a festive spirit, the king displays the vast wealth of his kingdom to his courtiers and provincial administrators for 180 days. Then he entertains the populace of Susa for seven more days in an enclosed garden. Coupled with the king’s feast is Queen Vashti’s party for her maids.

The Persians were noted for their practice of making decisions while drunk; in true form Xerxes, in “high spirits,” makes an ill-considered command to bring Vashti before him. He wants to flaunt her beauty just as he had displayed the other riches of his kingdom. The arbitrary monarch is refused by an equally stubborn queen. Xerxes then displays yet another unbecoming passion – anger. This royal couple knows no mutual honor or submission; his regard for her is based on lust and hers on vanity.

Nonplussed by Vashti’s refusal, the king seeks recourse through legal experts. There is a comic ring to the names of these pompous officials and to their advice. Their spokesman, Memucan, argues that domestic rebellion at court will become public information, so that women everywhere will despise their husbands. From the bureaucratic viewpoint religion and decency provide no safeguards. An irrevocable decree is required: Vashti is never again to enter the presence of Xerxes; her honor will be bestowed on someone better. This decree prepares the reader for a better queen (Esther). The king is pleased with Memucan’s advice and, godlike, commands that every man should rule over his own household.

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