

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 11 October 2026

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 96:1-3

Opening Hymn: 224 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

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: Isaiah 1:18

Psalm of Preparation: 64 Hear My Voice, O God

Old Covenant Reading: 1 Samuel 4:1-11

New Covenant Reading: 2 Timothy 3:1-5

Sermon Title: *Fashioning God Into an Idol*

Hymn of Response: 175 Your Law, O God, Is Our Delight

Confession of Faith: Nicene Creed (p. 852)

Doxology (Hymn 569)

Closing Psalm: 102B Thou, O Lord, Art God Alone

PM Worship

134 Come, Bless the LORD with One Accord

27A The LORD's My Light

422 We Rest on Thee

Old Covenant Reading: Exodus 18:1-12

New Covenant Reading: Romans 15:9-13

Sermon Title: *Blessed be Yahweh!*

Suggested Preparations

Monday (10/5) Read and discuss 1 Samuel 4:1–11

And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.

Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines. They encamped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped at Aphek. The Philistines drew up in line against Israel, and when the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the field of battle. And when the people came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the

covenant of the LORD here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies.” So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

As soon as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded. And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, “What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?” And when they learned that the ark of the LORD had come to the camp, the Philistines were afraid, for they said, “A god has come into the camp.” And they said, “Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness. Take courage, and be men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you; be men and fight.”

So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home. And there was a very great slaughter, for thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell. And the ark of God was captured, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died. (ESV)

Rick Phillips writes:

First Samuel 4 begins a lengthy sequence known to scholars as “The Ark Narrative,” spanning 1 Samuel 4:1-72. Having focused so far on the birth and calling of Samuel to be Israel’s prophet and judge, the story now goes on to replace him by these three chapters that tell of the fate of God’s holy ark. In chapter 4, the ark is presented as a focal point for “power religion” – that is, an idolatrous attempt to harness God’s power for our own purposes on earth.

Having focused on the affairs of the small family of Elkanah and Hannah, and then on the concerns of young Samuel, we now have our vision broadened to consider the affairs of Israel. These affairs centered on the menacing threat of the neighboring Philistines, a seafaring people who came from Aegean isles. Descending on the coast of Palestine in the early twelfth century B.C., the Philistines built five city-states between the sea and the hill country of Judah. In the Bible, the Philistines first appear during the judgeship of Deborah. By the time of Samson, they had spread their influence inland and subjugated much of Israel. Samson waged bitter war against the Philistines until his betrayal and capture. In the hour of his death, Samson regained his supernatural strength in order to pull down the pillars of the Philistine temple. Dealing a major setback to his enemy, Samson killed himself along with all the Philistine lords and three thousand other people.

All this was recent history to the Israel of Samuel's time. Now the Philistines had regrouped and began making a push into the hill country of Ephraim, not far from Shiloh and the tabernacle. Chapter 4 begins, "Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines. They encamped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped at Aphek." Aphek was an Ephraimite town near the Philistine-Israelite border. To counter this threat, Israel's army gathered at nearby Ebenezer. The account of the first battle at Ebenezer is as brief as the battle was depressing. "The Philistines drew up in line against Israel, and when the battle spread, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the field of battle."

In modern parlance, the word Philistine refers to a person who is lacking in or hostile to culture. But the ancient Philistines were as advanced as, if not more advanced than, any of the nearby peoples – technologically, militarily, and administratively. Thus, they were a constant nuisance and danger to Israel. Godon Keddie writes: "Their restless expansionism therefore afforded a perennial challenge to the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of God's covenant people. ... They were The 'scourge of God,' raised up to chastise the backslidings of the LORD's people." Therefore, "Israel's relationship with the Philistines was a barometer of their relationship with God. When they experienced defeat, they saw it as the withdrawal of divine favor."

Read or sing Hymn 224 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

Tuesday (10/6) Read and discuss Read and discuss 1 Samuel 3

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was.

Then the LORD called Samuel, and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down.

And the LORD called again, "Samuel!" and Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy.

Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant hears.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant hears.” Then the LORD said to Samuel, “Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. And I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.”

Samuel lay until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. But Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son.” And he said, “Here I am.” And Eli said, “What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also if you hide anything from me of all that he told you.” So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, “It is the LORD. Let him do what seems good to him.”

And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the LORD. And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD. (ESV)

Andrew Steinmann writes:

1 Samuel 3 is one of the more detailed accounts of the calling of a prophet, punctuated with a dozen instances of the verb [which means] “call.” The double “Samuel! Samuel!” evokes the call of the apostle Paul with “Saul, Saul.” Paul invoked his divine call to assert his apostolic authority, not for self-aggrandizement, but to verify the authenticity of the Gospel he preached: justification by grace alone and through faith alone. Pastors today are called as servants of the Word. They receive this call not directly from God but through the church, and they preach the Word of the Scriptures, not any claimed private revelation. Ministers exercise the authority of the One whose Word they faithfully proclaim.

Yahweh’s message to Samuel confirmed the previous prophetic message to Eli. God was now announcing that the time for the first stage of his judgment on Eli’s house was near. God stated that when Israelites would hear the news about these events, their ears would ring. This expression is always used to speak of shocking news about some calamity wrought by God.

God clarified that he will not relent of even a single element of the previous prophecy, since no amount of animal sacrifices or grain offerings could atone for the sins of Eli's house. Eli will bear the brunt of this judgment, because as the high priest he was responsible for all of the priests and ought to have brought an end to his sons' evil practices. ...

The last verses of this chapter depict Samuel as Yahweh's prophet. All Samuel's prophecies were fulfilled. Throughout Israel he was recognized as a true prophet of Yahweh. He continued to serve in Shiloh and to prophesy Yahweh's Word there.

Read or sing Psalm 64 Hear My Voice, O God

Wednesday (10/7) Read and discuss 2 Timothy 3:1–5

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. (ESV)

R. Kent Hughes writes:

Paul's brutal description springs from the inversion that had taken place in the false teachers' hearts, where love of God had been replaced by love of self. You can see this by reading the opening and closing characteristics together: "People will be lovers of themselves ... rather than lovers of God." Christ's Great Commandment to "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind'" and to "Love your neighbor as yourself'" had been turned upside down in the hearts of the false teachers in Ephesus. Self-love reigned. Notice that love suffers six tragic perversions in Paul's description: (1) "People will be lovers of themselves" (2) "lovers of money" (3) "without love" (4) "not lovers of the good" (5) "lovers of pleasure" (6) "rather than lovers of God." When love of God is replaced with love of self, all sorts of vices inevitably follow.

Thursday (10/8) Read and discuss Romans 15:8–13

For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles,

and sing to your name.”

And again it says,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”

And again,

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,
and let all the peoples extol him.”

And again Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse will come,
even he who arises to rule the Gentiles;
in him will the Gentiles hope.”

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. (ESV)

In verse 10, the Apostle Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 32, verse 43:

And again it is said,
“Rejoice, O Gentiles, **with** his people.”

It is a very small quotation that makes a single point. But the point is profound so we should slow down and make sure we see it. Deuteronomy 32 contains a lengthy poem from Moses about the astonishing faithfulness and grace which the LORD showed to His people Israel – who time and again turned away from Him. We can see why this would be good news for Israel, but why would that be good news for the Gentiles? What good does it do that another nation’s God is kind and forgiving *to* them? The answer is obvious: Yahweh is the Lord over all the earth, and His plan is to include the Gentiles among His people. Moses doesn’t simply call the Gentiles to rejoice. He calls them to rejoice **with** the LORD’s people. And that is good news.

As Jesus tells us: “Many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” This was always God’s plan. The promises to Israel were never to the end that Israel would simply be far greater than the other nations. “It was always so that, through Israel, God would call people of every nation into one family of salvation and praise.”¹

¹ N.T. Wright, Romans for Everyone, Vol. 2, p. 119.

Ethnic Israel largely failed in this calling. But the true Israel, Jesus Christ, is bringing this goal to pass. And by His grace, we enter into this mission with Him – calling those who are most radically different from us **to be reconciled to God** – and thereby reconciled to us as well.

Read or sing Hymn 175 Your Law, O God, Is Our Delight

Friday (10/9) Read and discuss Exodus 18:1–12

Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel his people, how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt. Now Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had taken Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her home, along with her two sons. The name of the one was Gershom (for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land"), and the name of the other, Eliezer (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"). Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was encamped at the mountain of God. And when he sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her," Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. And they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent. Then Moses told his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them in the way, and how the LORD had delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the LORD had done to Israel, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians.

Jethro said, "Blessed be the LORD, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods, because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people." And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God. (ESV)

R. Reed Lessing writes:

While more than one hundred of the occurrences of pharaoh in Exodus are in chapters 1-15 alone, the book's last three references to Egyptian kings comes in the Moses-Jethro discourse of chapter 18. Notably, Jethro's exclamation, "Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all gods" (Exodus 18:11), balances a pharaoh's previous rebuff, "Who is Yahweh, that I should listen to His voice by letting Israel go? I do not know Yahweh, and I will not let Israel go." A Midianite priest exemplifies the way non-Israelite people should respond to Yahweh – with faith. Jethro as the convert par excellence, is mentioned thirteen times in Exodus 18.

A Midianite becomes an Israelite. This is just the beginning. A Canaanite named Rahab and a Moabite named Ruth also become part of the chosen

people. Brace yourself. There's more. By God's grace, you and I have also become Israelites. What? Paul maintains that believers are children of Abraham (Romans 4:11, 16) and that the Church is the "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16 ESV). We're in!

Read or sing Psalm 102B Thou, O Lord, Art God Alone

Saturday (10/10) Read and discuss 1 Samuel 4:1–11

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Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines. They encamped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped at Aphek. The Philistines drew up in line against Israel, and when the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the field of battle. And when the people came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies." So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

As soon as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded. And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, "What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?" And when they learned that the ark of the LORD had come to the camp, the Philistines were afraid, for they said, "A god has come into the camp." And they said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness. Take courage, and be men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you; be men and fight."

So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home. And there was a very great slaughter, for thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell. And the ark of God was captured, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died. (ESV)

Rick Phillips writes:

Doubtless you want God's power to help you with your struggles and trials, and in its proper place this desire is good and God-honoring. But have you realized that you must first deal with God Himself? You must come before Him on His terms, facing the demand for perfect righteousness that His holiness requires. This is the realization that the arrival of the ark should have inspired, for the ark was designed to house God's holy law and also to provide the means of cleansing through the shed blood of the lamb. Realizing this, the Israelite army might then have cried out not with loud

shouts of carnal enthusiasm but with laments for their sins and cries to God for mercy – a sound far more terrifying to the world and to demons than the cheers that rang from Israel’s camp. With Christ in our midst through faith in His cross, we truly can prevail in the holy war against Satan and sin, knowing with Paul that nothing in heaven or on earth “will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:39).

Israel’s elders revealed their attitude in the use of a single telling word. They called for the ark, trusting “that *it* may come among us and save us” (1 Sam. 4:3). They were trusting *it* to save them – their box, their God-machine – rather than *Him*, the living God. Is there an *it* that you are trusting in the place of God – some technique, some routine, some ritual, some spiritual approach of your own that in truth only keeps you from facing God? For many people today, emotionally charged music is considered essential to their spiritual life. Others seek to meet their spiritual needs primarily through the social life of the church. These are just examples of putting things – even good things – in the place of God. There is no *it*, no *thing*, by which we are saved – not even good things such as our baptism, our church membership, and our knowledge of the Bible and theology. We are never saved by an *it* or a *thing*, but only by *Him*: the sovereign God of justice and mercy, who requires us to repent and be changed, to believe and seek His grace.

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