

Everyday FAITH Family Page

New Testament 1

Law/Gospel

I sin when I doubt God's Word and promises. **God sent His Son to forgive my sin and works through His Word and Sacraments to give me faith to believe and to strengthen my trust in Him.**

Bible Words

The LORD will do the thing that He has promised.
2 Kings 20:9

Fun Facts

The names of this family show God's work in their lives.

- In Hebrew, *Zechariah* means "Yahweh remembered."
(English Bibles usually translate Yahweh, the name of God, as "LORD" with small caps.)
- *Elizabeth*, the Greek version of the Hebrew name *Elisheba*, means "God is her oath."
- John, the short form of *Jehohanan*, means "Jehovah's gift" or "God is gracious and moved to pity."

The Birth of John Foretold

Luke 1:5–25

Married couple Zechariah and Elizabeth both came from families of priests. Faithful believers in the Lord, they trusted God's leading and purpose for their lives. In their old age, they realistically gave up thoughts of children; Elizabeth was barren.

All that changed when the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah as he burned incense in the temple during his service as a priest. Fear filled Zechariah when he saw Gabriel, but he probably felt more shocked when told he and Elizabeth would have a son. Gabriel said their son would be great before the Lord and turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord. The angel specified that Zechariah name the child John.

When Zechariah did not believe this news and cited the couple's ages, Gabriel made him unable to speak. Zechariah did not speak again until after his son's birth.

After Gabriel's visit, Elizabeth conceived. This son grew up to be John the Baptist, the prophet who called people to repent, baptized them, and prepared them to meet their Messiah. Jesus said, "Among those born of women, there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11).

An Offering of Incense

By Old Testament ceremonial law, priests burned incense of sweet-smelling spices or perfumes as an offering of worship (Exodus 30:1, 7–8).

In New Testament times, the Israelites observed formal prayer in the temple in the morning and evening. One priest, chosen by lot, entered the Holy Place of the temple to burn incense at the altar while people prayed outside. This probably was a once-in-a-lifetime privilege.

With Jesus as our High Priest, we don't need a priest to enter the Holy Place and pray for us. God invites us to pray to Him anytime, and we welcome the prayers of our pastors as they care for us spiritually.

Prayer

Lord, remember us and bring us into Your kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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Law/Gospel

Like Mary, I deserve nothing from God because of my sinfulness. **God gives me unmerited grace and favor because of His Son.**

Bible Words

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.
1 John 4:9

Fun Facts

Jesus is the English version of the Hebrew word *yehoshu'ah*, which means "Yahweh is salvation." The English spelling derives from a shortened Greek form. In the Greek New Testament, *Joshua* and *Jesus* are the same names.

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

Luke 1:26–38

A young girl named Mary received a surprise when the angel Gabriel suddenly appeared and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28). Gabriel said Mary would become pregnant with God's Son when the Holy Spirit came upon her. She should call Him Jesus.

Mary accepted the angel's message through faith. She said, "I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

We recognize the great gift of faith God gave Mary. We honor her and each year commemorate the annunciation on March 25 with a feast day, nine months before Jesus' birth.

Virgin Mary's firstborn Son was called Immanuel, which means "God with us," fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah (Isaiah 7:14).

Through Immanuel's suffering and death on the cross, we also receive God's favor and eternal blessing. Through faith, we have confidence that God is with us always and present through His Word and Sacraments.

Nazareth

The small town of Nazareth lies sixteen miles southwest of the Sea of Galilee. Here, the angel Gabriel told Mary she would become the mother of Jesus, God's Son. Later, Mary and Joseph raised their family there.

But Nazareth had a bad reputation, especially among religious leaders in Jerusalem. Its reputation may have been tarnished by a trade route in the nearby valley that brought many Gentiles into town.

New archaeological evidence suggests Rome also built a fort for several hundred soldiers near Nazareth. The presence of Roman soldiers, despised by the citizens, probably didn't help the town's reputation.

Prayer

Lord, remind us that You love us and sent Your Son as our Savior, no matter where we come from or where we live. In His name we pray. Amen.

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No one is righteous before God. **God sent His Son, Jesus, the Righteous One, to be born of Mary, so He could give me His righteousness, granting me full salvation.**

Bible Words

My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
Luke 1:47

The Magnificat

Mary's song of praise is the first of four hymns in the Gospel of Luke, sung since the early days of the Church and still sung today. We sing it in the Orders of Vespers and Evening Prayer in *Lutheran Service Book* (pp. 231–32, 248–49).

Life in the Womb

The living but unborn are persons in the sight of God from the time of conception. Since abortion takes a human life, it is not a moral option except to prevent the death of another person, the mother.

Jeremiah 1:5: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.

Psalm 139:16 (at right)

Question 52, *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*, copyright © 1986, 1991 CPH.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

Luke 1:39–56

When the angel Gabriel told Mary she would become the mother of our Lord, he also said her relative Elizabeth was pregnant with a son. Mary knew Elizabeth's age and situation. She hurried to visit her.

Curiosity and concern may have propelled Mary's journey, but Elizabeth's pregnancy also gave physical, tangible proof of Gabriel's promise about Mary's pregnancy. Elizabeth was a safe confidant for Mary with this unprecedented pregnancy by the Holy Spirit because she lived more than fifty miles away and was herself experiencing a miracle.

Scripture says Elizabeth's six-month-old baby leapt in the womb when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth said her son had leaped with joy at the presence of his Lord in Mary's womb. And before Mary even had a chance to tell what happened, Elizabeth blessed her for believing the Lord's message.

Every pregnancy is a miracle from God, but these two had special additions. Elizabeth's son, John, would pave the way for people to know and trust in Mary's Son, Jesus, our Savior and Lord.

Psalm 139

- ¹³ For You formed my inward parts;
You knitted me together in my mother's womb.
- ¹⁴ I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are Your works;
my soul knows it very well.
- ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from You,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
- ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in Your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.

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As a child of the first parents, Adam and Eve, I am sinful and in need of salvation. **John, the son of Elizabeth and Zechariah, and others who proclaim the Good News point me to Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.**

Bible Words

With God all things are possible.
Matthew 19:26

Fun Facts

Zechariah's song of praise thanked God for his son's birth. It also prophesied about the work John would do to prepare people to meet the promised Messiah, Jesus.

Zechariah foretold, "You child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God" (Luke 1:76-78).

We sing Zechariah's song, the Benedictus, in the Orders of Matins and Morning Prayer in *Lutheran Service Book* (pp. 226-27, 238-39).

The Birth of John

Luke 1:57-80

God did not say yes to Elizabeth and Zechariah's prayers for a son because they earned His favor. God gave them a child because their son was part of God's plan to bring His Son into the world.

The angel Gabriel told Zechariah this when he announced John's birth. Gabriel said their son would be great before the Lord and filled with the Holy Spirit, even in the womb. John would go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the people to meet Jesus.

John's birth brought much joy to his parents, relatives, and neighbors.

God gave John parents who taught him to fear, love, and trust in our Lord God. The Holy Spirit at work in John's life gave him faith and prepared him for the work the Lord planned for him to do.

The Holy Spirit is at work in you too. He works through His Word and Sacraments to give you faith, to strengthen you to live as His child, and to give you courage and power to do the work He prepared for you to do.

By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Prayer

God of great mercy, thank You for making us Your children in Baptism. Open our eyes to see the work You prepared for us to do. Give us grace to live as Your people in the world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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New Testament 1

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Relying on my own eyes and senses, I trust what is false instead of trusting that Christ is God's Son, my Savior. **God's Word gives me the truth that Jesus is Immanuel, God with me, my Savior.**

Bible Words

Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. Romans 10:17

Shared Proof

Before ultrasounds and modern diagnostics, knowing the gender of a baby was impossible. Yet, an angel revealed this information to both Mary and Joseph. And the angel told both to name the baby Jesus. Imagine the affirmation and joy they must have shared when they told each other these details! In faith, they moved ahead as a couple, trusting God and His mercy for them and their special child.

An Angel Visits Joseph

Matthew 1:18–25

Whew! Joseph was between a rock and a hard place. Mary, his betrothed, was pregnant, and he was not the father.

Betrothal agreements were more formal contracts than modern-day engagements. The bride and her family received presents, a dowry or bride-price, and gave money or goods to the new household, which returned to the bride if the couple divorced. Betrothed persons were called husband and wife. If her betrothed died, a woman became a widow. Couples did not live together or have sexual intimacy until after the wedding.

Still, a pregnancy could result in marriage if the man admitted parentage. If not, the law allowed two other options: divorce or death. Joseph showed his kindness and love for Mary by deciding to divorce her quietly. But then, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream.

The angel told Joseph not to fear taking Mary as his wife. The angel said Mary was pregnant by the Holy Spirit and would bear a son, whom he should name Jesus because "He will save His people from their sins" (v, 21). *Jesus* means "Yahweh saves" or Yahweh is salvation."

Fulfilled Prophecies

The Gospel of Matthew says these circumstances fulfilled prophecies from Isaiah 7:14: "The Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Matthew goes on to say that *Immanuel* means "God with us." What a perfect name for our Lord and Savior!

Through Immanuel's suffering and death on the cross, we receive God's favor and eternal blessing. Through faith, we have confidence that God is with us always and present through His Word and Sacraments.

Prayer

Lord God, send Your Holy Spirit to enlighten us and show us the truth of Your Word. Keep us Yours forever in Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

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Because of sin, I am afraid and helpless before God and deserve to die. **God sent His Son, Jesus, to save me from sin and death, and He makes me His own dear child through faith in Him.**

Bible Words

For unto you is born . . . a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:11

Fun Facts

David's family lived in Bethlehem. After he became king, it was known as "David's city." Jewish scholars anticipated it as the Messiah's birthplace from the prophecy in Micah 5:2: "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for Me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days."

Just Joking

Why did the shepherds go see baby Jesus? Because they herd the news.

How did the sheep feel about seeing baby Jesus? Baa-shful.

The Birth of Jesus

Luke 2:1–20

How did people who lived about eighty miles north of Bethlehem have a baby there? God worked through people to make it happen.

Near the time of Jesus' birth, Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus demanded that everyone go to their ancestral homes for a census. Joseph, a descendant of King David, and Mary traveled from their hometown in Nazareth of Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea. Most likely, this was not a pleasant journey for pregnant Mary.

When Jesus was born, Bethlehem was a small village in Judea, just six miles southwest of the capital city of Jerusalem. About 300–1,000 people lived there. Today, about 28,000 people call Bethlehem home; one-third of them are Christians.

Bethlehem means "house of bread." How appropriate for the Christ, the bread of life, to come to earth and be born in this city. Jesus said, "The bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. . . . I am the bread of life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst" (John 6:33, 35).

Sing

Remember Jesus' birthplace by singing "O Little Town of Bethlehem" as a family this Christmas.

Phillips Brooks wrote this hymn after seeing Bethlehem and the surrounding area on vacation from his work as pastor of the Church of the Holy Trinity in Philadelphia. First sung in a Sunday School Christmas service in 1868, the hymn finds a home in many similar services today.

Prayer

*O holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in, Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Immanuel!*

Lutheran Service Book 361:4

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God's Law demands perfection, but I am not perfect. **As God and man, Jesus lived a perfect life to satisfy the Law in my place.**

Bible Words

For my eyes have seen Your salvation that You have prepared in the presence of all peoples.
Luke 2:30–31

Fun Facts

Why did Joseph and Mary take Jesus to the temple as an infant? There were two reasons.

- A woman made a sacrifice for purification after childbirth (Leviticus 12; Luke 2:22, 24). If a she could not afford a lamb, she could offer two turtledoves or pigeons, which is what Mary did.
- After the exodus when the Lord spared the lives of the firstborn of Israel, God said all firstborn children and clean animals belonged to Him. People could redeem them at a month old by paying the redemption price of five shekels in silver (Numbers 18:15–16; Luke 2:23).

The Presentation of Jesus

Luke 2:22–40

Led by the Holy Spirit, Simeon and Anna, devout followers of the Lord, recognized the forty-day-old Jesus as the Lord's Christ the day He was presented to the Lord in the temple.

The Holy Spirit works through God's Word to reveal the truth to us about Jesus too. The Old Testament points to Jesus as the Messiah, the one God chose to save God's people.

Christós is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *mashiach*, which means "the anointed." In English, we translate these words as *Christ* and *Messiah*. Prophets in the Old Testament anointed kings and prophets with oil to show they were chosen by God. God promised to send the Anointed One to save His people.

Jesus fulfilled God's Law, even becoming the Lamb of God sacrificed to pay for the sins of the world. Jesus also fulfilled all of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. Consider these prophecies fulfilled with Jesus' birth:

Born of a virgin: Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:30–35; Matthew 1:23

From David's family: 2 Samuel 7:12–13; Matthew 1:6, 16; Luke 3:31

From Abraham's family: Genesis 17:7; Matthew 1:2; Luke 3:34

Born in Bethlehem: Micah 5:2; Luke 2:4–6

These fulfilled prophecies and many others show Jesus is the Messiah, our Savior, who suffered and died to pay for our sins and rose from the dead to give us new life with Him, now and forever.

The Probability of Fulfilled Prophecies

A science professor named Peter W. Stoner calculated the mathematical probability of one man fulfilling eight prophecies as one in a hundred million billion, or one with seventeen zeros behind it (source: Peter W. Stoner, *Science Speaks*, Moody Press, p. 107).

Check out the chart on page 1245 in *The Lutheran Study Bible* to see thirty-nine specific Old Testament messianic prophecies that Jesus fulfilled. The page also lists fifteen more about the kingly or suffering Messiah. Imagine *that* mathematical probability!

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Like Herod, I do not want to worship the Savior, Jesus.

Christ comes to me, a sinner, to turn my hardened heart toward Him through His gifts of Word and Sacrament, enabling me to offer Him my worship and praise.

Bible Words

We saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him.

Matthew 2:2

Fun Fact

Herod the Great, close friend of Caesar Augustus, became “King of the Jews” by election of the Roman Senate, ruling Samaria and Galilee from 37 to 1 BC.

Notoriously paranoid, Herod killed his favorite wife, several sons, and many others, including infants in and around Bethlehem, in an attempt to stop the newborn king of the Jews.

Although Herod was raised as a Jew, religious leaders questioned his religion. His precise reconstruction of the temple and its vast improvements appeared some. An ambitious builder, he also created an impressive harbor at Caesarea. Herod died soon after Jesus’ birth in 2 BC (errantly “before Christ” because of sixth-century dating errors).

The Visit of the Wise Men

Matthew 2

The account of the Wise Men’s visit to Bethlehem sometimes confuses us because many books, dramas, and songs conflict with the Bible.

For example, “We Three Kings of Orient Are” is a familiar Christmas song. However, the Bible does not identify three Wise Men. Instead, it tells about three gifts they brought: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And the Bible does not say they were kings. Matthew uses the Greek term *Magi* (MAY jai), which refers to members of a priestly class among the ancient Medes and Persians. Their gifts show wealth and generosity, not royal status.

Usually, *orient* refers to countries in the Far East, such as China or Japan. However, the term *Magi* points to visitors from the Mideast, possibly Persia.

The Bible hints at a months-long trip of over a thousand miles. By the time the Wise Men arrived, the Holy Family lived in a house in Bethlehem, not in a stable (Matthew 2:11). And when King Herod tried to kill baby Jesus, he ordered the deaths of male children in Bethlehem age 2 and younger.

The Wise Men never appeared at the stable. They probably never met the shepherds. But they worshiped the toddler Christ Child and brought Him gifts.

What about the Star?

The star that led the Wise Men was extraordinary. Scholars suggest natural occurrences to explain it, such as a new star, a comet, or the alignment of two planets, but the biblical account shows God at work.

The star was not reported over Bethlehem on the night of Jesus’ birth. God’s sign in that space and time was a multitude of angels. The star captured the attention of the Magi and prompted their journey west to find the King of the Jews, whose birth it announced.

Yet the Bible does not say the star led the Wise Men to the capital city of Jerusalem, where they looked for the new king. When the Wise Men left there, the star “went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was” in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:9). These are not characteristics of a natural phenomenon. They show God’s miraculous work.

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Because of sin, I cannot recognize who Jesus is. **Through Baptism and the power of His Word, God makes clear to me that Jesus is His Son and my Savior.**

Bible Words

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!"

Psalm 122:1

Fun Fact

A cycle of yearly festivals filled Jerusalem and its temple with pilgrims. These included the following:

- Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread in March–April
- Pentecost in May–June
- Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Booths in September–October
- Purim in February–March

The Boy Jesus in the Temple

Luke 2:41–52

The day probably started like many other travel days. Passover was over, and Jesus' family headed home to Nazareth.

Large crowds filled the roads. Family and friends walked together. Women and children sometimes left first because they traveled more slowly than the men. Everyone met their families around dinnertime.

But at the end of this first day of travel, Mary and Joseph realized Jesus was missing. Frantically, they returned to Jerusalem.

They finally found Jesus three days later in the temple, sitting with the religious teachers, listening and asking questions. All who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and answers.

Mary felt astonished too. Didn't Jesus know she and Joseph had looked for Him in great distress? Jesus said, "Didn't you know I needed to be in My Father's house?" Already at this young age, Jesus gave indications of His special identity as God's Son.

Mary and Joseph didn't understand Jesus' words, but His actions showed respect for His parents. Jesus obediently and submissively returned home with them.

Mary "treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:51–52).

Asking Questions

Some Pharisees and Sadducees were also rabbis. They often met at the temple to discuss God's Word. They debated and asked questions of one another, a common way rabbis taught.

Later, when Jesus became a rabbi, He often answered people's questions with more questions. For example, read about Jesus' encounter with a rich young man in Mark 10:17–27.

Prayer

Jesus, open my eyes and heart so that I can see and understand that You are the Christ, the Son of God. In Your name I pray. Amen.

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Sin hardens my heart against God, and I try to earn my salvation. **God's Word works in my hardened heart, causing me to repent and believe in the Savior.**

Bible Words

Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!
John 1:29

Bible Facts

Consider these facts.
Joshua followed Moses; Joshua's name means "one who saves."
Elisha followed Elijah; Elisha's name means "one who saves."
Jesus followed John the Baptist; Jesus' name means "one who saves."

John Prepares the Way

Matthew 3:1–12

John the Baptist's message, work, and appearance certainly attracted attention. People from Jerusalem, Judea, and the area around the Jordan River came to see John and to receive the Baptism he offered.

John proclaimed "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4). By compelling the people to repent, turn away from their sins, and turn back to God, John prepared the people to receive Jesus Christ and His message.

Those who did not receive John's Baptism, including Pharisees and other religious leaders, rejected God's purpose for them (Luke 7:29–30). Jesus' teaching confused, befuddled, and angered them. Ultimately, they felt jealous of the crowds that followed Jesus and threatened by His popularity. They feared He would take away their positions and power.

The Wilderness

John the Baptist lived and preached in the Desert of Judea. This rugged and uninhabited region stretched about twenty miles from Jerusalem to the Jordan River and the Dead Sea.

The wilderness was important in Jewish worship. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest offered a special sacrifice. Placing his hands on the head of a goat, he confessed the sins of all Israelites. This transferred the people's sins to the "scapegoat," which was then removed from the temple and sent to the wilderness to die.

John the Baptist introduced Jesus by saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Jesus, the sinless Lamb of God, took all of our sins on Himself, died on the cross, and rose again, crushing sin, death, and the power of the devil.

Prayer

Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us and forgive our sins. Amen.

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Because of God's wrath and anger over sin, I and all people need a Savior. **In Baptism, I am made a child of the heavenly Father and an heir of heaven.**

Bible Words

For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Galatians 3:26–27

From the Catechism

What benefits does Baptism give? It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

Which are these words and promises of God? Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16)

Luther's Small Catechism, Baptism, Second Part

The Baptism of Jesus

Luke 3:15–22

Since John's Baptism offered forgiveness of sins, why did Jesus, the sinless Son of God, ask John to baptize Him? John asked this same question: "I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" Jesus explained, "It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:14–15).

Jesus stood in the waters of the Jordan River as a substitute for us. Standing in our place, Jesus took on flesh, lived without sinning, died to pay for our sins and take God's wrath on Himself, and rose from the dead. He fulfilled the Law and the Prophets about the Messiah, and He fulfilled righteousness for us at His Baptism.

Through one man, Adam, we all received sin and its wages of death. Through one man, Jesus Christ, we receive abundant grace and the free gift of righteousness.

At Jesus' Baptism, the Spirit of God descended on Him, and a voice from heaven affirmed that He is God's beloved Son, with whom the Father is well pleased. This event began Jesus' public ministry, His journey to Jerusalem and the cross, and His work to redeem and reclaim lost and condemned sinners as God's own children.

Jesus' Baptism opened the door to connect sinful people to Himself. Our Baptism connects us to Jesus. In Baptism, we receive Jesus' righteousness, the gift of faith, forgiveness of sin, and eternal life. The Holy Spirit begins His work in us.

Baptismal Hymn

See this wonder in the making: God Himself this child is taking
As a lamb safe in His keeping, His to be, awake or sleeping.

Here we bring a child of nature; Home we take a newborn creature,
Now God's precious son or daughter, Born again by Word and water.

"See This Wonder in the Making" (LSB 593:1, 4). Text by Jaroslav J. Vajda; copyright © 1984 CPH.

Prayer

Lord God, thank You for making us Your children in Baptism. Amen.

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The devil tempts me, and I often give in. **In Christ, God forgives my sin, provides all that I need for this life and the next, and gives me power to overcome temptation.**

Bible Words

[Jesus] has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.
Hebrews 4:15

Quotable

“To have Jesus distrust, forsake, or misuse his Sonship is the aim of the temptations.”

Arthur A. Just Jr.

Luke 1:1–9:50, Concordia Commentary, p. 171.
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The Temptation of Jesus

Luke 4:1–13

After Jesus’ Baptism, the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness, where He fasted for forty days.

Then Satan tempted Jesus with three offers, each intended to derail God’s plan for our salvation. If successful, Satan would win the battle for our souls, as Jesus satisfied His hunger, enjoyed His power, and proved His divine nature.

Satan first tempted Jesus by suggesting He turn a stone into bread. Satan misjudged. Jesus, with divine willpower and purpose, chose hunger for our good. He didn’t then or ever use His divine power for personal gain.

Next, Satan said if Jesus would worship him, all the kingdoms of the world would become His. Again, the devil misjudged. Soon enough, God the Father would subject all things to Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:27).

Finally, Satan taunted Jesus as the Son of God, daring Him to throw Himself from the pinnacle of the temple and show the people a spectacular rescue by angels. Again, Satan misjudged.

Dramatic rescue was not in Jesus’ plan. Later, when soldiers came to arrest Him, Jesus reminded Peter He could appeal to His Father, who would at once send more than twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53). Instead, Jesus died so that we might live.

In each temptation, the devil lied, twisted God’s Word, and made promises he couldn’t keep. Jesus refused to accept Satan’s easy road. He knew our salvation depended on His suffering, death, and resurrection.

In resisting the devil, Jesus won a victory that He finalized on Calvary’s cross and the empty tomb of Easter. If He had avoided suffering and accepted the glory, we would have been condemned for eternity.

Prayer

Faithful Lord, don’t allow us to be tempted beyond our abilities, but provide a way of escape, so that we may endure. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

(Based on 1 Corinthians 10:13)

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New Testament 1

Law/Gospel

My sinful nature does not recognize Jesus as the Son of God. I futilely try to manipulate Jesus into being what I want. **Jesus is the only true God, the Savior who rescues me from sin, death, and the devil. He is the true Jacob's ladder upon whom the angels will come down and escort me to my heavenly home.**

Bible Words

Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

John 1:49

Fun Facts

"Son of Man" is a phrase used only by Jesus in the New Testament and only to refer to Himself. Any faithful Jewish person would recognize this messianic language from the Old Testament.

Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael

John 1:43–51

Questions sometimes define generations. Baby boomers ask, "Where were you when President Kennedy was shot?" Generation Xers discuss the Challenger space disaster, and millennials ask about the Twin Towers.

Perhaps Jesus first disciples' asked one another, "How did you meet Jesus?" What vivid memories and lively discussions they could share!

Philip, whom Jesus later chose as one of the Twelve, met Jesus in Galilee. Philip excitedly told his friend Nathanael about Jesus of Nazareth. Skeptical, Nathanael replied, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip replied, "Come and see."

Jesus greeted Nathanael, saying, "Behold, an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" As God, Jesus knows all things. Nathanael apparently agreed with the assessment. He asked how Jesus knew him. Jesus replied that He had seen Nathanael under a fig tree before Philip found him.

Impressed, Nathanael called Jesus the Son of God and King of Israel. Jesus told him that he would see even greater things. He would see the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. With these words, Jesus told Nathanael that He was the Messiah come down from heaven, as foreshadowed in their forefather Jacob's dream (Genesis 28:10–17).

Questions Kids Ask

Kids ask their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, teachers, and others many questions.

"Why is the moon round? Why is the sky blue?"

"Why doesn't our dog eat the same food we do?"

"Why do I have to do that?"

No question is more important than the one Nathanael asked, "Who is Jesus?" Help your children know our Savior by pointing to Jesus when these kinds of questions come up. Take them to worship and religious education classes. Read devotions and children's Bibles together, pray, and trust the Lord as you all continue to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

cph.org/SundaySchool

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