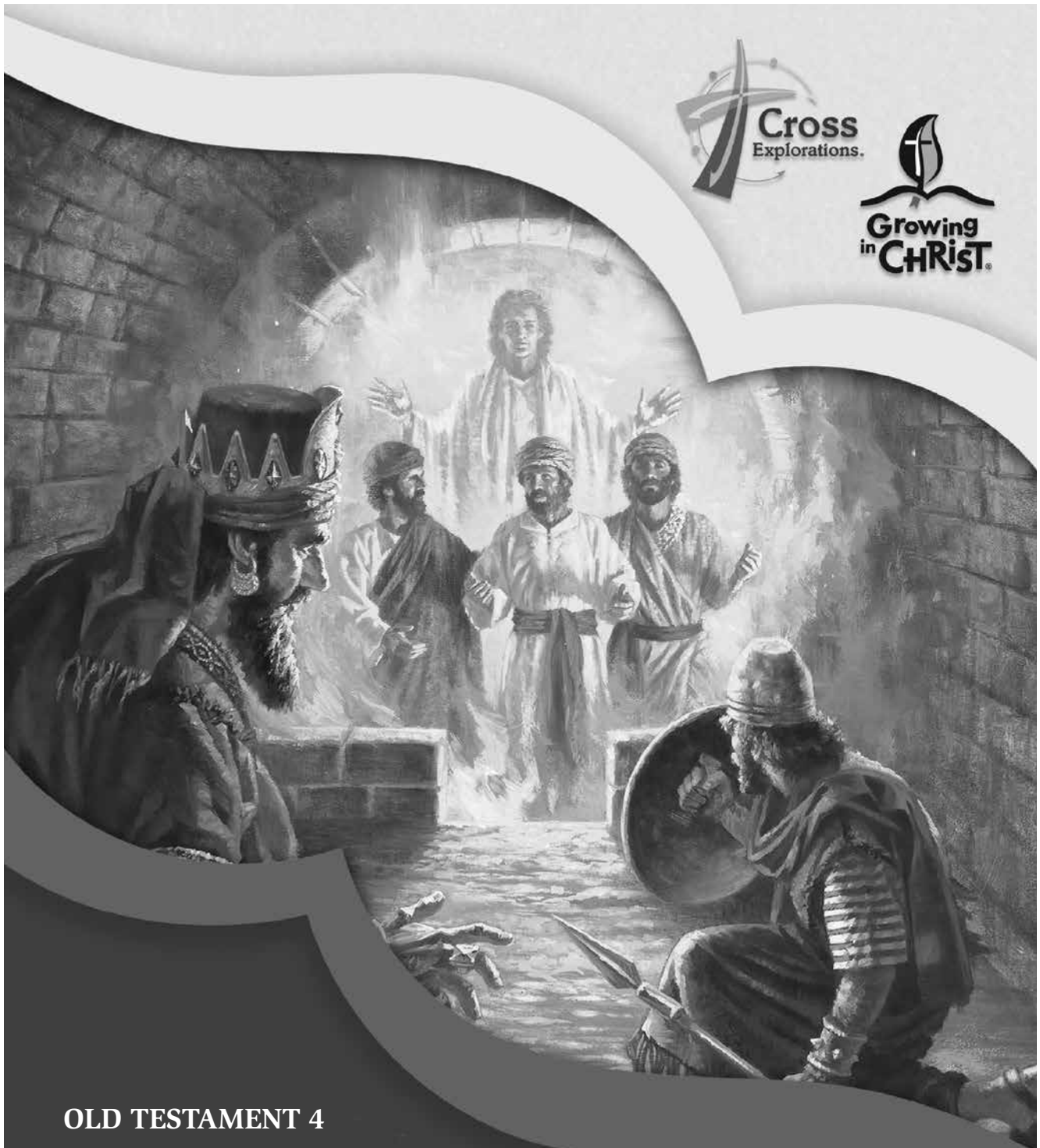




OLD TESTAMENT 4

Adult Bible Study

God Works through Prophets and Kings

REPRODUCIBLE STUDY PAGES



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Written by Carl Roth (lessons 1–8), Paul Philp (lessons 9 and 12), and Gifford Grobien (lessons 10, 11, and 13)

Edited by Lorraine Groth

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Introduction

God promises to strengthen our life in Christ as we study His Word. This Adult Bible Study series provides resources to help you do just that, giving you an opportunity to study some familiar, and possibly not-so-familiar, biblical accounts in depth.

This guide has thirteen sessions, each divided into four easy-to-use sections:

Start—Section 1 of each session invites discussion and thinking to draw participants into the study.

Study—Section 2 of each session explores a portion of Scripture through the use of a brief commentary and questions that help the participants study the text.

Share—Section 3 of each session helps the participants apply God's Law and Gospel revealed in the scriptural account to their own lives.

Send—Section 4 of each session provides the participants with practical suggestions for taking the theme of the lesson out of the classroom and into the world.

This study is designed to assist both novice and expert Bible students in their study of Holy Scripture. It offers resources that will enable them to grow in their understanding of God's Word while strengthening their life in Christ.

As an added benefit, the sessions in the Adult Bible Study series follow the Scripture lessons taught in both Growing in Christ and Cross Explorations Sunday School curriculums. Parents will enjoy studying the Bible stories their children are studying in Sunday School. This will provide parents and children additional opportunities to

- explore God's Word together;
- extend lesson applications to everyday situations;
- pray together; and
- engage in family activities that grow out of lesson truths.

How to Use This Bible Study

This leader guide gives you all the material you need to teach the thirteen Bible stories for this quarter. The material is designed to be used in an adult Bible study while children are participating in Sunday School. Shorten or lengthen the suggested section times to fit your time frame.

Each lesson includes a brief Bible commentary with the key point, Law/Gospel statements, discussion questions with leader notes, and a front-and-back **Reproducible** Student Page. Make copies of the Student Page to distribute to the members of the class. This format allows for the fluctuation in class size that is common to adult study groups. Additionally, churches will save money by ordering only one leader guide, rather than individual student books.

We encourage you to order the set of Bible Posters for this quarter. These large, beautifully rendered works of art will provide your class with memorable visuals of the texts they are studying. (To order, call 1-800-325-3040; ask for CPH stock number 44-4111).

World History	Dates	Biblical Events
United Kingdom 1050–930	1050 BC	Saul reigns 1050–1010
	1040 BC	David born
	1010 BC	David reigns 1010–970
King Hiram of Tyre reigns 978–944	978 BC	
	970 BC	Solomon reigns 970–930
	967 BC	Temple constructed 967–960
Divided Kingdom 930–586	930 BC	
Mesopotamia—Assyrian Empire 900–626	900 BC	King Ahab reigns 874–853
	874 BC	Elijah ministers 870–845
	870 BC	Elisha ministers 848–797
	848 BC	Jonah ministers
	790 BC	
First recorded Olympic Games	776 BC	
Rome founded	753 BC	
	722 BC	Northern Kingdom falls to Assyrians
	715 BC	Hezekiah reigns 715–686
	626 BC	Jeremiah's call to ministry
	605 BC	Nebuchadnezzar reigns 605–562
	605–536 BC	Daniel ministers
Exile	587/586 BC	Southern Kingdom falls to Babylon; Jerusalem and the temple destroyed
Persian Empire 539–337	539 BC	
Restoration 538–432	539–538 BC	Zerubbabel leads first return home
	516 BC	Second Temple dedicated
Roman Republic	509 BC	
	478 BC	Esther becomes queen of Persia
	458 BC	Ezra leads second return to Jerusalem
	444 BC	Nehemiah leads third return

Preparing the Lesson

 Date of Use

The Wisdom of Solomon

1 Kings 3

Key Point

Solomon, though wise, needed what we and all sinners need: Christ, Wisdom Himself, and the forgiveness He brings.

Law/Gospel

The fear of the Lord—reverence for God and trust in Him—is the beginning of wisdom, yet, in my sin, I am unwise, failing to trust in the Lord above all things. **Jesus, Wisdom personified, gives to me and all who believe in Him a share of His wisdom, that is, Himself.**

Context

Solomon, the second child of David and Bathsheba, was Israel's third king. A "little child" when he assumed the throne (1 Kings 3:7), he reigned forty years (tenth century BC). Right after becoming king, he settled some old political scores from his father's reign (2:13–46); then "the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon" (v. 46).

The nation expanded its borders, there was money galore, the temple was built, and Israel was relatively at peace with its neighbors. But not all was well. Solomon, though "he was wiser than all other men" (4:31), foolishly overtaxed and overworked his citizens and contracted alliances with Gentile nations. Worst of all, his pagan wives "turned away his heart after other gods" so that he "did what was evil in the sight of the LORD" (11:4, 6). As a result, after his death the nation split into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah).

Commentary

Wisdom has little to do with a person's IQ. There are high school dropouts with more true wisdom than the Ivy League intelligentsia. How can this be? Wisdom is not a human achievement but a divine

endowment; it is received, not achieved. Wisdom is keeping one's thoughts, deeds, and words in sync with the divine will in all matters of life. The wise look down from heaven to earth; that is, they see life through God's eyes. And this they do by having a listening heart.

Young Solomon prayed for an "understanding mind" (3:9), which in the Hebrew is literally a "listening heart." And what do the ears of the heart listen for? The voice of wisdom—that is, the voice of Christ Himself—verbalizing His will and ways through the Sacred Scriptures.

Moses preached that when Israel was given a king, the king was to "write for himself in a book a copy of this law" (Deuteronomy 17:18). This Scripture was to "be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God" (v. 19). The divine Word creates the fear of the Lord, which in turn is the beginning of wisdom. And that Word is heard only by those to whom Christ has given a listening heart.

Sadly, even those with such a heart also heed other voices, as did Solomon—voices of lust or greed or malice, voices that lead astray even the wisest of men. This king who so wisely decided the case of the two prostitutes would himself go whoring after other gods in his twilight years (1 Kings 11:4).

Solomon, though a wise man, needed what all sinners need: Christ, Wisdom Himself, and the forgiveness He brings. This One who is greater than Solomon gives us more than a listening heart—He gives us His own heart, pulsating with love and absolution that knows no bounds.

To hear an in-depth discussion of this Bible account, visit cph.org/podcast and listen to our Seeds of Faith podcast each week.

Lesson 1

The Wisdom of Solomon

1 Kings 3

1 Start (5 minutes)

Pray Lord God, You gave to Solomon great wisdom and promised to be with him, but his sinful flesh warred against Your Spirit and cast him into great sin. Yet in Your mercy, You raised up One greater than Solomon to save him and us from our sins—Your Son, Jesus Christ, who is our wisdom and righteousness and sanctification. Thank You for the unsurpassable gift of faith in Christ. Bless us with Your Holy Spirit that we might find in Your Word the wisdom that leads to salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Say 1. “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding” (Job 28:28). In contrast with God’s definition, discuss what is considered wisdom in our modern Western culture. Also read Genesis 3:4–6 and discuss how the human quest for wisdom has gone wrong.

Answers about what is considered wisdom in our culture will vary.

Conventional wisdom holds that money can make us happy and pleasure is the highest good. Many scientific theories and philosophies (in Greek, *phil* means “love” and *sophia* means “wisdom”) hold that humans are products of an accident of nature and evolved, which means that life is random and has no essential meaning. And the vast array of information on the Internet gives the illusion that wisdom is just a click away.

While worldly wisdom has its place in day-to-day affairs, our modern Western culture has in large part rejected the most important wisdom, “the fear of the Lord.” But this is nothing new. It began in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve rejected the wisdom of fearing God by listening to His word; instead they fell for Satan’s seductive promise that they could be “like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). Eve saw “that the tree was to be desired to make one wise” (3:6), and the rest is history.

The modern illusion that we can become truly wise by investigation into and experience of the creation reflects that primal sin of Adam and Eve: the desire of creatures to usurp God’s role as the source of all wisdom. Yet all human wisdom leads to the same place: sin and death. “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding” (Job 28:28).

Leader Note

Encourage participants to bring their own Bible to class so they can mark key passages each week. Set out Bibles for those who do not bring their own.

2 Study (15 minutes)

Say 2. Describe the structure and tone of Solomon's prayer recorded in 1 Kings 3:6–9.

Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 3:6–9 is a model of gratefulness and humility as he responds to the Lord's gracious invitation to ask for a gift (3:5). It begins with praise of God for His steadfast covenant love toward Solomon's father, David, recounting what He has graciously done in the past and is still doing for Solomon now. Then he confesses his weakness and inability to serve Israel without the Lord's help, so he asks the Lord for "an understanding mind to govern" (v. 9) God's people with discernment between good and evil.

Say 3. "Why?" is our favorite question because we want to know the cause behind things. What caused God's "great and steadfast love" to David (1 Kings 3:6)? See Exodus 34:6–7; 20:5–6; and 1 John 4:19.

Our quest for causes sometimes stops short of the ultimate cause of things. For example, in answer to the question "How do you know you are a Christian?" many Christians reply, "Because I believe in Jesus." But what caused you to believe? The cause is the Holy Spirit, who produces faith through the Gospel, as Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ." So the ultimate cause of our being Christian is God; our faith comes from Him.

We view a similar situation when Solomon says to God, "You have shown great and steadfast love to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward You" (1 Kings 3:6). Did David's walking in that way cause God's steadfast love for him? Or did God's love cause David to walk in faithfulness, righteousness, and uprightness of heart? Solomon, in fact, was putting the best construction on his father's life. David *did not* always walk before God in faithfulness, righteousness, and uprightness, as his conduct with Bathsheba (and murder of Uriah) indicates.

Exodus 34:6–7 (which was written over four hundred years before David lived) shows that the Lord's essential love and mercy cause Him to keep "steadfast love for thousands." The cause is not in people, but in God.

But in Exodus 20:5–6, God says He shows "steadfast love to thousands [ESV text note: 'to the thousandth generation'] of those who love Me and keep My commandments." He shows love to those who love Him, but what causes our love of Him? "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). David, Solomon, and all of us are totally dependent on God's love and mercy in the Christ, Jesus. So while it is true that God showed steadfast love to David because of David's faithfulness, the cause of David's faithfulness was God's love. We must keep the ultimate cause in view at all times so that we can give God alone all the glory!

Say 4. The Holy Spirit worked in Solomon's heart to produce a faithful response to God's invitation, "Ask what I shall give you" (1 Kings 3:5). According to 1 Kings 3:10–14, what about Solomon's prayer pleased God? What do we learn from Solomon about prayer? What do 1 Corinthians 10:24 and Matthew 6:33 have in common with Solomon's prayer?

An unbelieving king would ask for “long life or riches or the life of [his] enemies” (1 Kings 3:11); in other words, a selfish request. But remarkably, Solomon asked for something that would specifically benefit his neighbor: a mind instructed by godly wisdom.

We can learn from Solomon to focus our prayers on the needs of others. This does not mean that we neglect to pray for our own needs (we do this in the Lord’s Prayer), but even the things we ask for ourselves should have the goal of serving our neighbor. Paul supports this when he says, “Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor” (1 Corinthians 10:24).

The Lord was pleased with Solomon’s request, so He multiplied His blessings on Solomon. Jesus promises the same to His followers: “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). This does not mean that we seek God’s kingdom as it comes to us in the Word and Sacraments with the intention of gaining benefits for ourselves—that would be selfish! Rather, we seek the Lord’s grace and mercy in the Church, and He superabundantly provides for our every need.

Say 5. In 1 Kings 3:15, Solomon awakes from his dream and then presents offerings to the Lord. Why had the location of his sacrifices changed? What were his offerings for? See Psalm 116:12–19.

Before Solomon was granted a “listening heart” by the Lord, he would frequent the high place in Gibeon, where he “used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar” (1 Kings 3:4). Now Solomon only sought out the place where the Lord had promised to dwell: in Jerusalem, above the ark of the covenant of the Lord.

Old Testament sacrifices were never meritorious; they did not earn God’s favor. Solomon’s sacrifices at the ark were burnt offerings and peace offerings. And then he held a feast for all his servants, celebrating the Lord’s goodness!

In some settings of the Lutheran Divine Service, Psalm 116:12–13, 17–19 is used to express thanksgiving to God as worshipers prepare for another feast for servants of the King: the Lord’s Supper!

Say 6. Solomon’s greatness is described in 1 Kings 4:20–34: Judah and Israel’s blessedness and safety under him, his rule over foreign lands, his enormous provisions, incredible wisdom, the production of three thousand proverbs, and among other things, his great fame in other lands. However, Solomon was his own worst enemy and became the Lord’s enemy. What did he do, and how did the Lord respond? See 1 Kings 11:1–4, 9–13. What glimmer of hope does God offer to Israel in 11:13? See Revelation 5:5.

Solomon rebelled against the Lord’s specific prohibition against marrying pagan women (1 Kings 11:1–2). As God predicted, Solomon’s heart strayed from Him. He “did what was evil in the sight of the LORD” (v. 6) and built high places for his wives (vv. 7–8). The Lord became angry with Solomon for his unbelief and disobedience (vv. 9–10), so He decided to tear the kingdom from Solomon’s hands. However, He said to Solomon, “I will give one tribe [i.e., Judah] to your son, for the sake of David My servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen” (v. 13).

For a time, Solomon’s son did reign in Judah, but this promise pointed forward to Jesus Christ, Son of David, Son of Solomon, Judah’s Lion, Root of David, who conquered sin, death, and the devil by His life, death, and resurrection (Revelation 5:5).

Jesus is greater than Solomon in both His person and His work. Jesus is God the Son, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians

2:3). To know Christ, then, is to have all wisdom in heaven and earth! But to know Christ is more than just knowing His person—that Jesus is God the Son in human flesh; to know Christ is to know His works as well.

After He lived a sinless life in our place, He provided the “sign of the prophet Jonah” (Matthew 12:39) as His greatest work: He died for our sins, was buried, descended into hell, and burst forth from the grave in order to justify sinners. Woe unto any generation that rejects His person and work, for “behold, something greater than Solomon is here” (v. 42). But for all who have been called to repentance and faith in Christ by the Holy Spirit, they, too, will come forth from the grave and rise up to eternal life in heaven!

Share (10 minutes)

Say 7. **God’s invitation to Solomon was “ask what I shall give you” (1 Kings 3:5). However, what words from the Lord show that His invitation was not unconditional? See 3:10–12. What makes Christian prayer different than simply making wishes? See Luke 11:9–13 and 1 John 5:13–15.**

Although the Lord says to Solomon, “Ask what I shall give you,” He never says, “I will give you whatever you ask.” It seems that if Solomon had asked for things selfishly, the Lord would not have granted the request. But because the request “pleased the Lord,” He said, “I now do according to your word” (1 Kings 3:10–12).

Prayers offered by Christians are only God-pleasing when they reflect things that the Lord would have us ask for. When Jesus says, “Ask, and it will be given to you . . . everyone who asks receives,” He follows it up by saying that God will “give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him” (Luke 11:9–13). Clearly, the invitation to “Ask, seek, knock” and the promises to “receive, find, be opened” are not unconditional but will only be answered according to the Father’s will, as John also writes: “If we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:14–15). Saying, “Your will be done” (Matthew 6:10) is fundamental to Christian prayer.

Finding comfort in prayer happens by focusing on God’s promises to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask (Luke 11:13) and on the fact that we already “have eternal life” through faith in the Son of God (1 John 5:13). When we have the Holy Spirit, we have faith in Christ; when we have faith in Christ, we have every good blessing in heaven and on earth, as Paul writes: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:3). What more could we possibly need?

Say 8. **Solomon’s handling of the case of the two prostitutes in 1 Kings 3:16–28 demonstrates the application of his divinely endowed wisdom to a practical situation. However, the Christian Gospel is not a matter of practical wisdom. What is that Gospel, and what does the unbelieving world think of the wisdom of the Gospel? See 1 Corinthians 1:17–25. According to 1 Corinthians 1:27–31, why did God save the world this way?**

The Gospel is the proclamation of “Christ crucified” (1 Corinthians 1:23) for our sins. Through this “folly” that the Church preaches, it pleases God to “save those who believe” (v. 21). Yet the unbelieving world finds the message of a crucified

God offensive and would rather seek salvation through “the wisdom of the world,” an impossible task (v. 20).

The Gospel is not practical wisdom, but is God’s “foolish” way of saving sinners from eternal death. God wipes out any claims we might have based on our own wisdom when He saves us by grace alone, “so that no human being might boast in the presence of God” (v. 29). But we can “boast in the Lord” (1:31) because God has given Christ for us as “wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1:30), no matter whether the unbelieving world considers us foolish or not!

4 Send (5 minutes)

Before they go home, give participants the text for next week’s lesson, and encourage them to read and think about it during the week. Ask them to ponder how learning God’s Word and trusting God above all things, even in difficult times, gives wisdom.

For the **Family Connections** section, encourage the adults with children in Sunday School to review their child’s Sunday School leaflet together at home.

For the **Personal Reflection** section, 2 Timothy 3:14–17 sums up the benefits of Scripture beautifully:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

Lesson 1 Student Page

The Wisdom of Solomon

(1 Kings 3)

- ① “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding” (Job 28:28). In contrast with God’s definition, discuss what is considered wisdom in our modern Western culture. Also read Genesis 3:4–6 and discuss how the human quest for wisdom has gone wrong.
- ② Describe the structure and tone of Solomon’s prayer recorded in 1 Kings 3:6–9.
- ③ “Why?” is our favorite question because we want to know the cause behind things. What caused God’s “great and steadfast love” to David (1 Kings 3:6)? See Exodus 34:6–7; 20:5–6; and 1 John 4:19.
- ④ The Holy Spirit worked in Solomon’s heart to produce a faithful response to God’s invitation, “Ask what I shall give you” (1 Kings 3:5). According to 1 Kings 3:10–14, what about Solomon’s prayer pleased God? What do we learn from Solomon about prayer? What do 1 Corinthians 10:24 and Matthew 6:33 have in common with Solomon’s prayer?
- ⑤ In 1 Kings 3:15, Solomon awakes from his dream and then presents offerings to the Lord. Why had the location of his sacrifices changed? What were his offerings for? See Psalm 116:12–19.
- ⑥ Solomon’s greatness is described in 1 Kings 4:20–34: Judah and Israel’s blessedness and safety under him, his rule over foreign lands, his enormous provisions, incredible wisdom, the production of three thousand proverbs, and among other things, his great fame in other lands. However, Solomon was his own worst enemy and became the Lord’s enemy. What did he do, and how did the Lord respond? See 1 Kings 11:1–4, 9–13. What glimmer of hope does God offer to Israel in 11:13? See Revelation 5:5.
- ⑦ God’s invitation to Solomon was “ask what I shall give you” (1 Kings 3:5). However, what words from the Lord show that His invitation was not unconditional? See 3:10–12. What makes Christian prayer different than simply making wishes? See Luke 11:9–13 and 1 John 5:13–15.
- ⑧ Solomon’s handling of the case of the two prostitutes in 1 Kings 3:16–28 demonstrates the application of his divinely endowed wisdom to a practical situation. However, the Christian Gospel is not a matter of practical wisdom. What is that Gospel, and what does the unbelieving world think of the wisdom of the Gospel? See 1 Corinthians 1:17–25. According to 1 Corinthians 1:27–31, why did God save the world this way?

Lesson 1 Student Page

Through the Week

Family Connections

If you have children in Sunday School, go over their leaflets together, sharing with one another what you learned about today's Bible story.

We can never be reminded enough that "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10). Regular meditation on the Small Catechism helps with this. We are reminded to "fear, love, and trust in God above all things" (First Commandment). And "God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not do anything against them" (Close of the Commandments). And Dr. Luther counsels a good way to return thanks after a meal:

After eating, they shall . . . reverently and with folded hands say: Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, His love endures forever. He gives food to every creature. He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call. His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor His delight in the legs of a man; the Lord delights in those who fear Him, who put their hope in His unfailing love (Psalm 136:1, 25; 147:9–11). *Then shall be said the Lord's Prayer and the following:* We thank You, Lord God, heavenly Father, for all Your benefits, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen. (Returning Thanks)

Also consider this helpful reminder from Dr. Luther's Large Catechism:

But for this purpose [God] has given us children and issued this command: we should train and govern them according to His will. Otherwise, He would have no purpose for a father and a mother. Therefore, let everyone know that it is his duty, on peril of losing the divine

favor, to bring up his children in the fear and knowledge of God above all things [Proverbs 1:7]. (LC I 173)

Personal Reflection

Our wisdom comes from God, and He gives it through His Word. We encounter His Word in the Holy Scriptures and in Christian writings based on the Bible, such as creeds, catechisms, and confessions. Of course, it all starts with the Holy Scriptures, God's inspired and inerrant Word, which is "able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). But the Apostles' Creed is a wonderful summary of the Bible, as Dr. Luther says:

Here [in the Creed] you have the entire divine essence, will, and work shown most completely in quite short and yet rich words. In these words all our wisdom stands, which surpasses and exceeds the wisdom, mind, and reason of all people [1 Corinthians 1:18–25]. The whole world with all diligence has struggled to figure out what God is, what He has in mind and does. Yet the world has never been able to grasp the knowledge and understanding of any of these things. But here [in the Creed] we have everything in richest measure. (LC II 63)

Preparing the Lesson

 Date of Use

Solomon Builds the Temple

1 Kings 5–6

Key Point

Though God resided within the Old Testament temple, He was hidden behind the veil in the Most Holy Place. Jesus is the unveiled Most Holy Place, accessible to all, enfolding believers in the arms of His Word and Sacraments.

Law/Gospel

In my sin, I want to keep God at a distance; I don't want Him to see who I really am. **God, in His love, draws me near to Him through His Son, Jesus, the Word made flesh. He tabernacles (dwells) with me and all believers through Word and Sacrament, forgiving my sin.**

Context

David desired to build a “house of cedar” for God, to replace the tent in which his Lord had been residing (2 Samuel 7). But the Lord declared that Solomon would be the one to build such a house. Work on the temple was begun 480 years after Israel left Egypt, around 967 BC (1 Kings 6:1), and was completed seven years later (v. 38). It consisted of two main parts: the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies) and the Holy Place. It was a sight so dazzlingly beautiful that it was deemed an “exalted house” for the King of kings (8:13). Yet it was only temporary. The Babylonians destroyed it in 587 BC.

Commentary

In his prayer at the dedication of the temple, Solomon asked, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You; how much less this house that I have built!” (8:27). The purpose of the temple was not to put a structural straitjacket on God. He would remain omnipresent, but at the temple, He would be omni-accessible, as it were. One might say there is a continuum of God’s presence in the Old Testament.

At one end, He is “most present” in a theophany, or visible manifestation (as at Sinai; see Exodus 20). At the other end, He is “least present” in that He is everywhere. Between these two extremes lies His presence in the temple. He is more readily accessible there, and more constantly present in an explicit manner, than in the rest of creation.

The temple was God’s earthly palace. Most important for Israel, it was also a hospital of sorts. Those sick with sin or ill with uncleanness would come there to be healed by their Doctor. His medicine was the sacrificial blood of animals, the benedictions of priests, the oil of anointing, the incense of prayers, the hymns of the Levitical choirs. The divine Word was in, with, and under each of these, working healing for those impaired in body or soul.

But, gift of God though it was, the temple was too little, too early. It was too little because something greater than the temple was still needed. And it was too early, for on the horizon was a new and better temple in which God would be even more present than in the sanctuary of old.

“Will God indeed dwell on the earth?” Solomon asks. “Yes,” we respond, as we gaze at the swaddled infant lying in the manger. For Jesus is our sanctuary—not merely the place in which God dwells, but God Himself dwelling as a flesh-and-blood man. Though God resided within the Old Testament temple, He was hidden behind the veil in the Most Holy Place. But not Jesus. He is our unveiled, human Most Holy Place, truly accessible to all, enfolding us in the arms of His Word and Sacraments.

To hear an in-depth discussion of this Bible account, visit cph.org/podcast and listen to our Seeds of Faith podcast each week.

Lesson 2

Solomon Builds the Temple

1 Kings 5–6

Start (5 minutes)

Pray O Lord, You hid Yourself in the Old Testament temple behind the curtain, but through Your Word, You promised to be present with Your people to forgive and bless them. Your Son, Jesus Christ, became flesh to dwell among Your people and make them into temples of Your Holy Spirit. You promise to forgive and bless us through His presence in Your Word and Sacraments in the Christian Church. Be with us now as we study Your Holy Word, and grant us listening hearts to be brought to repentance and deeper faith in Your promise to be present among us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Say 1. All people who believe in a higher power invent some form of worship by which they show reverence to their deity. What makes Christian worship (along with the now obsolete Old Testament temple worship) unique among all religions? See Psalm 50:7–15; Matthew 18:20; and 20:28. Why have Lutherans traditionally called their worship the Divine Service?

A defining feature of pagan worship is that such worship is thought to placate the deity and in some way merit blessing. In ancient Israel, idolatrous nations brought food to their idols because they thought the gods were hungry. Not so the Lord. He always made it clear to Israel that He did not need their sacrifices; as He said, "The world and its fullness are Mine" (Psalm 50:12). Sacrifices were instituted for the benefit of Israel. The problem identified in Psalm 50:7–15 is that ritual sacrifices without faith and thanksgiving are pointless. True worship of God is faith in His mercy and promises: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me" (v. 15).

A more precise translation from the Greek of Matthew 18:20 is "For where two or three *have been gathered* in My name, there am I among them." This places the emphasis of our worship gatherings not on our works but on the Gatherer's work. The Lord has gathered us together as His people to be among us "not to be served but to serve" (Matthew 20:28). He still does this for us today when the Lord gathers us for worship.

Lutherans have traditionally called worship the Divine Service because God serves us with forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation through His Word and Sacraments in the church. In thanksgiving, we heed Paul's admonition to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Romans 12:1). We do serve the Lord with our worship, but only after He has served us. This teaching from the Small Catechism also helps us keep straight who the main actor in the Divine Service is: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith" (Third Article).

2 Study (15 minutes)

Say 2. Compare 1 Kings 5:3–7 with 1 Chronicles 22:6–10. Why was David prohibited from building “a house for the name of the LORD”? Who is the main actor in these passages?

The Lord told David that he was not allowed to build the temple (though he wanted to) because “you have shed so much blood before Me on the earth” (1 Chronicles 22:8). David was even more violent than his predecessor: “Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Samuel 18:7), whereas the Lord would give a son to David who would be “a man of rest” (1 Chronicles 22:9).

It is easy to view the main actors in this drama as David and Solomon. However, notice who is the subject of the most important verbs in these passages. David wanted to build the temple, but “the word of the LORD came” to prevent him (1 Chronicles 22:8). The Lord would give rest, peace, and quiet to Solomon and Israel (v. 9) after putting David’s enemies underfoot (1 Kings 5:3). And even though Solomon would enact the building of the temple, this was only in fulfillment of the Lord’s promise to David, “Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, shall build the house for My name” (v. 5). Even the pagan king Hiram acknowledged the Lord as the main actor, identifying Him as the One “who has given to David a wise son to be over this great people” (v. 7).

Above all, only the Lord can promise a “royal throne in Israel forever” (1 Chronicles 22:10) to David and Solomon. And He has fulfilled this promise:

And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:30–33)

Say 3. Solomon built “the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah” (2 Chronicles 3:1). What else happened on that mountain? See Genesis 22:1–2, 9–14. Why is this location so appropriate for the temple?

The Lord gave Abraham the deepest test of faith on Mount Moriah when He instructed him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering on an altar (Genesis 22:1–2). That day, Abraham proved that he feared and trusted in God (v. 12). In His mercy, the Lord provided a substitute sacrificial victim, the ram caught in a thicket (v. 13). Abraham named Mount Moriah “The LORD will provide,” and it was a perpetual saying in Israel, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided” (v. 14).

This is a most fitting name for the location of God’s temple! As we read in the Commentary, at the temple on Mount Moriah, the Lord provided “a hospital of sorts. Those sick with sin or ill with uncleanness would come there to be healed by their Doctor. His medicine was the sacrificial blood of animals, the benedictions of priests, the oil of anointing, the incense of prayers, the hymns of the Levitical choirs. The divine Word was in, with, and under each of these, working healing for those impaired in body or soul.”

Jesus is our ram caught in a thicket, the substitute sacrificial victim whom the Lord provided to be offered up on the altar of the cross on another mountain,

Calvary. In the “temple of His body” (John 2:21), we are provided with even greater blessings than were available at the temple in Jerusalem.

Ask 4. What instructions and promises did the Lord give Israel concerning the tabernacle and later the temple? See Exodus 20:24; 29:38–46; Numbers 6:22–27; and 2 Chronicles 7:15.

The instructions and promises that the Lord gave concerning the tabernacle and temple are too numerous to mention, consisting of large sections of the Old Testament. However, some that you may want to remember are that the Lord promised, “In every place where I cause My name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you” (Exodus 20:24).

At the tabernacle and temple, the Lord’s name dwelled, and He was present to meet with His people, hear their prayers, and bless them. This happened at the daily burnt offering at the temple, where the Lord showed approval of Israel (Exodus 29:41), met with and spoke to them there (29:42), sanctified (made holy) His people, and blessed them with His name (Exodus 20:24; Numbers 6:22–27). The blessing from the Lord in Numbers 6:22–27 was effective; though spoken by the priests, the Lord was present in those words, offering His blessings of grace and peace. The Lord promised concerning the temple, “My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place” (2 Chronicles 7:15).

All of these instructions and promises reinforced Israel’s faith in the Lord’s words: “I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God” (Exodus 29:45–46).

Say 5. Solomon’s temple would not last forever. Because of Israel and Judah’s stubborn unbelief, God used the Babylonians in 587 BC to destroy much of Judah and take the people into exile. The temple was completely razed. But the Lord was not finished with Judah or the temple. According to Ezra 1:1–3 and 6:14–18, what would the future hold? What does Haggai 2:9 predict about the temple? How does Jesus fulfill this, according to John 2:18–22?

The Lord said through Isaiah “of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd, and he shall fulfill all My purpose’; saying of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be built,’ and of the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid’” (Isaiah 44:28). This promise was fulfilled in 539 BC when the Lord used the Persians, led by Cyrus, to conquer Babylon. Then the Lord moved Cyrus to proclaim a return to Jerusalem for the exiles and to initiate the rebuilding of the temple in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, as well as that of Jeremiah 25:12–13 and 29:10 (Ezra 1:1–3). Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, they began rebuilding the temple (see Ezra 1–6). After several interruptions, it was completed and dedicated in 516 BC, with sacrifices and worship being performed for the first time in more than seventy years. The people “celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy” (Ezra 6:16).

The prophet Haggai, who was instrumental in the construction of the second temple, prophesied: “The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts” (Haggai 2:9). However, this prophecy was not fulfilled by the earthly temple. The second temple fell into disrepair over the centuries and was finally replaced by Herod’s magnificent temple. Begun in 18 BC, it was only completed in AD 65, but was utterly destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, just as Jesus had predicted (Luke 19:41–44). It was never rebuilt.

Haggai's prophecy was fulfilled by the temple of Jesus' body (John 2:21), though the proclamation of peace through Jesus was made at the temple when aged Simeon took Jesus up in his arms and sang, "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation that You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel" (Luke 2:29–32). In some settings of the Divine Service, this canticle is sung after Holy Communion. We celebrate the heavenly peace we receive in the Lord's temple, the true body and blood of Jesus Christ, given and shed for the forgiveness of all of our sins.

God the Son, the Word of God, was made flesh and "tabernacled" among us (John 1:1, 14). His body became the true and final temple of God and was put to death for our sins but was raised on the third day (John 2:18–22).

Share (10 minutes)

Say 6. At the temple and tabernacle, Israelites had access to God, where He blessed them. Where is God accessible for us today? See Matthew 1:23; 18:20; 26:26–28; and 28:20. How is God with us, both individually and corporately? See 1 Corinthians 3:16–17 and Ephesians 2:18–22.

Jesus is Immanuel, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23), who promises to be with us wherever two or three have been gathered in His name (18:20). He dwells with us and gives us His true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins in the Lord's Supper (26:26–28). In the Christian Church, through the Gospel, our Baptism, Absolution, and Communion, He fulfills His promise to be with us until the end of the age (28:20).

When Paul asks the Corinthians, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16), "you" is plural in both places. So Paul is speaking to the Corinthians as they have been brought together in the Christian community. Yet each individual is as much a "temple of the Holy Spirit" as another.

Through Christ, we "have access in one Spirit to the Father" (Ephesians 2:18), and together as the Church we are being built up into "a holy temple in the Lord" (v. 21). We are *in* Christ, in whom we "are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (v. 22). This is exceedingly comforting, but it also reminds us of the high and holy calling we have received to ever live mindful of the fact that we are the "temple of the Holy Spirit."

Say 7. The Bible certainly has much to say about how we are to live today, but eternal life always is kept in view. In 2 Corinthians 5:1 and Revelation 7:13–17, what comfort does God give us about our eternal residence?

Should our earthly home, our body, be destroyed, "we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1). So we have nothing to fear! John describes this in his vision of heaven as God's temple (Revelation 7:15), where we will serve God eternally, suffer no pains, and enjoy the tender care of the Lamb of God, our Good Shepherd (vv. 16–17). Since we have already been led to the living waters of Holy Baptism and have washed our "robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (v. 14), we need have no doubt that we will be one of those in heaven "clothed in white robes" (v. 13).

Say 8. One of the most striking features of 1 Kings 5–6 is the enormous quantity of time and resources devoted to constructing the “house of the LORD” (6:1). What could this example suggest to the Christian churches today? Also consult Matthew 26:6–13.

There are no commandments in the Bible concerning how Christian churches are to be designed or adorned, but the great amount of attention and resources devoted to the Old Testament tabernacle and temple suggest that we should be willing to devote considerable time and resources to the houses where God dwells with us. But how do we determine how much to spend or how much effort to expend? Couldn't money spent on sanctuaries and organs and candles be given to the poor instead?

These are not easy questions to answer, and the Lord has not left us specific directions. We do know that the Lord Jesus has promised to be with His Church wherever two or three are gathered in His name (Matthew 18:20). Therefore, we should devote great care to the adornment of our sanctuaries and the reverence of our worship to His greater glory. However, we know how much our Lord cares for the poor, for those who suffer want, and their presence is always an opportunity to show them the mercy and love of God (Matthew 26:11).

4 Send (5 minutes)

Before they go home, give participants the text for next week's lesson, and encourage them to read and think about it during the week.

In the **Family Connections** section, encourage the adults with children in Sunday School to review their child's Sunday School leaflet together at home.

For the **Personal Reflection** section, Dr. Luther's quote is from his lectures on the Book of Genesis.

Lesson 2 Student Page

Solomon Builds the Temple

(1 Kings 5–6)

- ① All people who believe in a higher power invent some form of worship by which they show reverence to their deity. What makes Christian worship (along with the now obsolete Old Testament temple worship) unique among all religions? See Psalm 50:7–15; Matthew 18:20; and 20:28. Why have Lutherans traditionally called their worship the Divine Service?
- ② Compare 1 Kings 5:3–7 with 1 Chronicles 22:6–10. Why was David prohibited from building “a house for the name of the LORD”? Who is the main actor in these passages?
- ③ Solomon built “the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah” (2 Chronicles 3:1). What else happened on that mountain? See Genesis 22:1–2, 9–14. Why is this location so appropriate for the temple?
- ④ What instructions and promises did the Lord give Israel concerning the tabernacle and later the temple? See Exodus 20:24; 29:38–46; Numbers 6:22–27; and 2 Chronicles 7:15.
- ⑤ Solomon’s temple would not last forever. Because of Israel and Judah’s stubborn unbelief, God used the Babylonians in 587 BC to destroy much of Judah and take the people into exile. The temple was completely razed. But the Lord was not finished with Judah or the temple. According to Ezra 1:1–3 and 6:14–18, what would the future hold? What does Haggai 2:9 predict about the temple? How does Jesus fulfill this, according to John 2:18–22?
- ⑥ At the temple and tabernacle, Israelites had access to God, where He blessed them. Where is God accessible for us today? See Matthew 1:23; 18:20; 26:26–28; and 28:20. How is God with us, both individually and corporately? See 1 Corinthians 3:16–17 and Ephesians 2:18–22.
- ⑦ The Bible certainly has much to say about how we are to live today, but eternal life always is kept in view. In 2 Corinthians 5:1 and Revelation 7:13–17, what comfort does God give us about our eternal residence?
- ⑧ One of the most striking features of 1 Kings 5–6 is the enormous quantity of time and resources devoted to constructing the “house of the LORD” (6:1). What could this example suggest to the Christian churches today? Also consult Matthew 26:6–13.

Lesson 2 Student Page

Through the Week

Family Connections

If you have children in Sunday School, go over their leaflets together, sharing with one another what you learned about today's Bible story.

An incredible number of workers from various trades helped construct the temple. Work is a fundamental part of our lives, and the first place we learn to work hard should be in the home.

The Bible has much to say about our work as Christians. Adam's original purpose was to work in the garden (Genesis 2:15), but sin caused all labor to become toilsome and difficult (Genesis 3:17–19). Yet our lives are intended for work, not idleness, and if we are unwilling to work (we have to be able, of course) then we should not even be allowed to eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10–12)!

God has given us victory over sin and death because of Jesus' death and resurrection, so we continue in the "work of the Lord," confident that, in the Lord, our "labor is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58). The "work of the Lord" is none other than our daily vocations. We are simply to do whatever the Lord places into our lives to do, and He is pleased with us because of Christ. And when we "labor and are heavy laden," Jesus offers us rest for our souls as we come to Him and learn from Him—that is, receive His teaching and forgiveness in church (Matthew 11:28–30).

Personal Reflection

Dr. Martin Luther wrote:

This is true, indeed, that God is not bound, neither to Jerusalem nor to any other place, and that He is able to save also elsewhere. No one will deny this. But try it and see what you will get! If you invent forms of worship according to your own judgment, you will be in dan-

ger of God's wrath. By His almighty power God could save the human race without Christ, without Baptism, and without the Word of the Gospel. He could have illuminated men's hearts inwardly through the Holy Spirit and forgiven their sins without the ministry of the Word and of ministers. But it was not His will to do so. And God very strictly prohibited all erring forms of devotion and worship.

When hypocrites say "Whatever is done with good intention is pleasing to God," those self-chosen devotions are to be condemned, and men should be reminded that they should direct their eyes where God has revealed Himself. . . . God abominates and condemns all erring thoughts outside the one and only revelation made in the Word and sacraments, to which He wished to gather us and in which He wished to include us. For this reason Christ sent His disciples with this command: "Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19–20), and "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16). He wants us to be gathered in connection with the Word and Baptism as by a sure and infallible sign because He wants to save us and help us, just as He promised He would listen at the mercy seat [in the temple] among the people of Israel. (AE 6:128–29)