

Please explain Epiphany and the Circumcision of our Lord.

Q: I was wondering if you could explain Epiphany to me a little better. Also, when was the Circumcision of the Lord?

A: Epiphany is from a Greek word, meaning to "reveal" or "make manifest." The season of Epiphany is our time to focus on the revelation of "who" Jesus is: both true God and man. On the Festival of Epiphany, Jan. 6, we hear the reading of the visit of the wise men (Mt. 2:1-12). In that event, these foreigners bowed down in acknowledgement that this infant was indeed the Christ, the Son of God.

The Sunday after Epiphany we hear the story of the Baptism of Jesus (Mt. 3:13-17). Here, God the Father confirms that this man standing in the water is His beloved Son. The following Sunday we hear the story of the changing of water into wine at Cana (John 2:1-11). Through this event, Jesus revealed his glory and his disciples put their faith in him.

According to Jewish law, all males were circumcised on the eighth day--one week after their birth. We don't know the actual birth date of Jesus, so we don't know the day of His circumcision either. But since we have set aside a date for observing His birth, Dec. 25, we then set aside Jan. 1 (eight days later) as the date for the naming and circumcision of Jesus (Luke 2:21). The significance of this day is that our Savior began His long ministry of submitting Himself to the Law in our place. Also, this was the first shedding of His blood, and points, in a small way, to the ultimate shedding of His blood on the cross.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.

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