

MARTIN LUTHER wrote “Christ Our Lord to the Jordan Came” (“*Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam*”) as a Catechism hymn on Baptism. Its probable first appearance is in the form of a broadsheet in 1541. Its first appearance in a hymnal is in Joseph Klug’s 1543 *Geistliche Lieder zu Wittenberg*, where it is found with what has ever since been its proper tune.

The tune was originally written for Luther’s hymn “May God Bestow on Us His Grace” (“*Es wollt uns Gott genädig sei*”) and published in Johann Walter’s collection of polyphonic hymn settings, the *Geystliche gesangk Buchleyn*, Wittenberg, 1524. The setting provided here is Johann Hermann Schein’s, from his *Cantional*, 1627, adapted to fit the original form of the melody.

For the content of the hymn, Luther drew from the scriptural sources of Christian Baptism; hence the references to the institution of Baptism (stanza 5, Matthew 28:19) and the threat of our Lord against those who disbelieve the blessings of Baptism (stanza 6, Mark 16:16). While stanzas 1, 3–4 are devoted chiefly to the actual baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, if one compares the contents of stanzas 2, 5–7 to the Small Catechism, one sees a remarkable correspondence to Luther’s presentation there.

The hymn appears in the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book*, 1912, No. 401, as “To Jordan Came Our Lord the Christ,” with an altered version of the translation by Richard Massie, 1854, but it is not included in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 1941. It is restored in the *Lutheran Service Book*, 2006, as “To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord,” No. 406, in a 1976 translation by Elizabeth Quitmeyer, but the translation is copyrighted, and no harmonies are provided.

The translation for the Free Lutheran Chorale-Book is partially based on that of Richard Massie, as found in the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book*, though thoroughly revised to preserve as much as possible of Luther’s original word choice and phrasing. Most of the translation is new, leading it to be listed as composite. The text and music here provided may be freely used and reproduced for any purpose whatever, and are offered with the prayer that they may serve for the edification of Christian people everywhere.

Christ Our Lord to the Jordan Came

A spiritual song about our Holy Baptism, wherein is right briefly summarized what it is, who instituted it, of what use it is, etc.

Dr. Martin Luther

The Free Lutheran Chorale-Book
Davenport, Iowa
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Christ Our Lord to the Jordan Came

Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam
Martin Luther, 1541
Tr. composite

8.7. 8.7. 8.7. 8.7.7.

CHRIST UNSER HERR
Geystliche gesangk Buchleyn, 1524
Setting: Johann Hermann Schein, adapt.

1 Christ our Lord to the Jor-dan came, For thus His Fa - ther
2 So mark ye well and all per - ceive What God doth say of
3 Such hath He made clear as can be, With signs both shown and
4 The Son of God Him - self here stands In ten - der hu - man
5 To His dis - ci - ples spake the Christ: Go hence, the whole world

will - ed. John's bap-tism for Him - self He claimed, His of - fice
Bap - tism, And what a Chris-tian should be - lieve Lest her - e -
spok - en. The Fa - ther's voice was op - en - ly Heard loud up -
na - ture; The Ho - ly Ghost on Him de - scends, Clad in a
teach - ing, The lost, for whom I've paid the price, Re - pent - ing

thus ful - fill - ed. There - by He drew for us a
sy - en - trap - him. Though low - ly wa - ter, plain and
on the Jor - dan. He said: This Man is My dear
dove's fair ves - ture. We there - fore should not doubt at
through your preach - ing. He who be - lieves and is bap -

bath To wash us from trans-gres - sion, And drowned He
clear, Is His good will and plea - sure, His ho - ly
Son In whom I am de - light - ed. I now com -
all, When to the font we're wend - ing, That all three
tized Shall be there - by most bless - ed And, born a -

al - so bi - ter death By His own blood and pas
Word is al - so here, His Spir - it with - out mea -
mand you, ev' - ry one, That ye, though Him in - vit -
Per - sons us do call, To earth in grace de - scend -
gain in heav'n - ly wise, No more by death op - press -

sion; A new life thus a - vail - eth.
sure: He doth Him - self bap - tize - us.
ed, Should fol - low all His teach - ings.
ing With us to make their dwell - ing.
ed; He shall in - her - it heav - en.

6 Who in this mercy hath not faith,
Sin still his soul possesses.
He is condemned t'eternal death
Deep in hell's dark recesses.
No help is his own holiness,
His deeds have not availed him,
Turned by that sin to worthlessness
Which from his birth assailed him;
He can't himself deliver.

7 The eye doth naught but water see,
Plain men the water pouring;
But from this blindness faith is free,
Christ Jesus' blood adoring.
It is for faith a flood of red,
By Christ's own blood thus tinted,
For all our sin and weakness shed
Which Adam has transmitted,
And we too have committed.