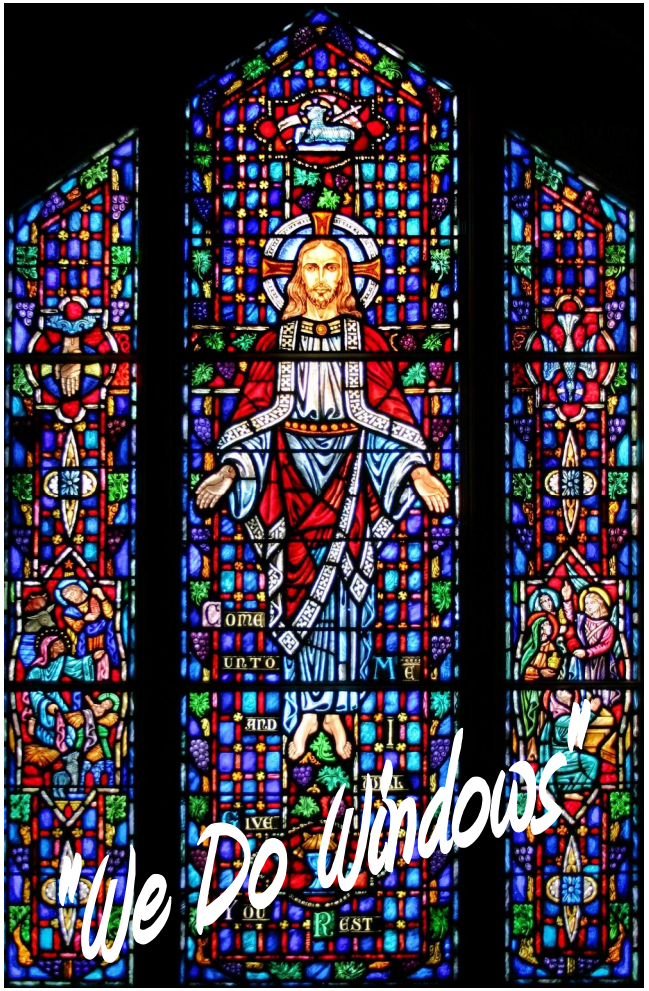
The Windows of St. Matthew's



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The Art of Stained Glass

Brief History of Stained Glass Windows…

Colored glass as an art was used widely in both ancient Egypt and Ancient Rome. But arranging them into an order to create pictures and designs did not occur until much later. There are many remains of colored alabaster set in wood from the 4th and 5th centuries, but he earliest known work of ñstained glassòdid not appear until the year 675 C.E. at the monastery of St. Peterôs in Munkwearmouth, Sunderland (England).

The peak of stained glass windows as an art form was in the Middle Ages, developed by the Christian Church. Itôs main function at that time was pictorial and was often called the ñpoor manôs Bible,òfunctioning to teach the Biblical story to a largely illiterate society.

Brief History of Stained Glass Windows at St. Matthew's…

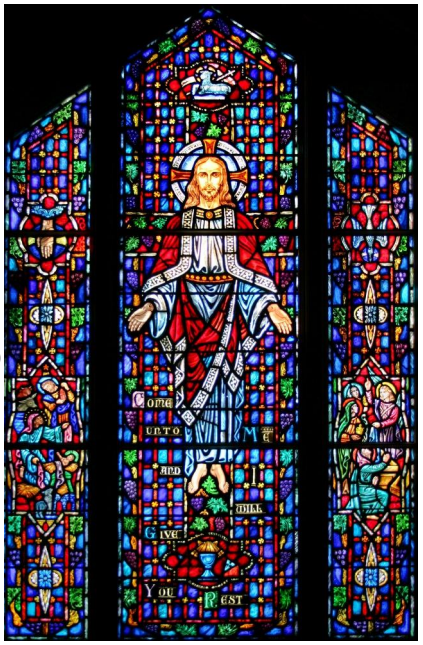
St. Matthewôs moved into its current building in 1956. Shortly after that move, the large altar window depicting the welcoming Jesus was installed, thanks to a generous donation by the Harry Quick family.

In 1971, a bequest was left to St. Matthewôs by the Levering family with the stipulation that it be utilized for stained glass windows. After conducting a study, additional funds were raised, and the 20 windows depicting the Biblical story were purchased and installed on the north and south walls of the nave in 1972.

St. Matthewôs enjoyed beautiful windows in its previous facility as well. When the congregation moved to its current location, those windows were sold with the building to a small group attempting to begin a new congregation. Legend has it that a few years later, when that congregation failed, the owner of the building sold the stained glass windows separately for more money than the original purchase price of the building.

The Altar Window

Jesus Invites Us



In the 11th chapter of Matthew, Jesus says, ñCome to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you restò(Matt 11:28, NRSV). The most prominent window at St. Matthewôs is the one above the altar and is centered around the open-armed Christ inviting all to come. Subtly placed within the panels is Jesusô invitation from this verse.

This main window actually encompasses much of Christianityôs key doctrines.

The Trinity is symbolized at the top of the window with the creative hand of God (top left lancet - Genesis 1) depicting the Father, the ñLamb that takes away the sin of the worldò(top center lancet - John 1:29) representing the Son, and the descending dove (top right lancet - Matthew 3:16) symbolizing the Holy Spirit.

The outstretched arms of Jesus seem to be pointing to the two main events of Christôs life. His right hand points to the Christmas scene with Mary and Joseph leaning over the manger (left lancet - Luke 2), while his left hand directs viewers to Easter morning and the three women encountering the angel at the empty tomb (right lancet - Mark 16).

The grape vines in the borders and on the cross recall Jesusô words, ñI am the vine and you are the branches,ò(John 15:5) reminding believers that they are Christôs presence in the world today. At Jesusôfeet are symbols of the elements by which Jesus is most intimately present in the Church: the escalloped shell representing baptism and the chalice representing communion.

Old Testament Windows #1

Creation

In the Small Catechism, Luther teaches that Godôs creative activity is at the very roots of our faith: ñI believe that God has created me and all that existsé All this God does out of fatherly and divine goodness and mercyé ò

The very first of St. Matthewôs Biblical windows is called ñCreation.ò It depicts the seven day creation account recorded in the first chapter of Genesis. The days of creation are easily seen in the windows as follows:

- Day 2 - Sky and Water (Gen 1:6-8)
- Day 3 - Rocks and Trees (Gen 1:9-13)
- Day 4 - Sun, Moon and Stars (Gen 1:14-19)
- Day 5 - Fish and Birds (Gen 1:20-23)
- Day 6 - Bunnies and Panther (Gen 1:24-31)

Though the days of creation can be identified within the window, the point of the Genesis 1 creation account is that God created in an orderly fashion and designed the world to exist in a harmonious manner. The artistôs blending of the colors and the juxtaposition of the elements of creation have captured Godôs original intent for creation nicely.

Conspicuously missing from this initial window are human beings, who, according to the first chapter of Genesis, were also created on the sixth day. Perhaps the absence is intentional, for the human beings are sitting in the pews. This window brings all of creation into St. Matthewôs worship space and reminds worshippers that God created human beings to be part of the ñvery goodòcreation and charged them with the care of it (Gen 1:28-31).

In addition, the hand that extends from the upper left of the window illustrates that God continues to create, provide, protect and care for humanity as well as for all of creation (again from Lutherôs Small Catechism).

Old Testament Windows #2

The Fall

Biblical skeptics have argued that the Bible contains two different accounts of creation - the seven day account of Genesis 1 and the account of man coming first and then naming the animals before woman is created out of one the manôs ribs as recorded in Genesis 2-3. The mistake on the part of the skeptics is to assume the creation account(s) are intended to offer a scientific explanation of the beginning of the world. They do not.

Genesis 1 is intended to describe the order and harmony by which God created. Genesis 2-3 is the first in a series of stories that explains the plight of humanity.

The second Biblical window, entitled ñThe Fall,ò tells the story of Genesis 2-3. The beautiful arrangement of colors and shining sun depict Eden - the ñperfectògarden where Adam and Eve lived. It reflects the harmony of creation from the first chapter of Genesis.

The tree is the symbol of Godôs first commandment of prohibition. Adam and Eve were allowed to eat of any tree in the garden except the one in the center known as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:15-17). But as is the case with most humans, being told ñnoò results in the desire to eat of the forbidden fruit. It didnôt take much for the serpent to tempt the man and woman into breaking this commandment (Gen. 3:1-6).

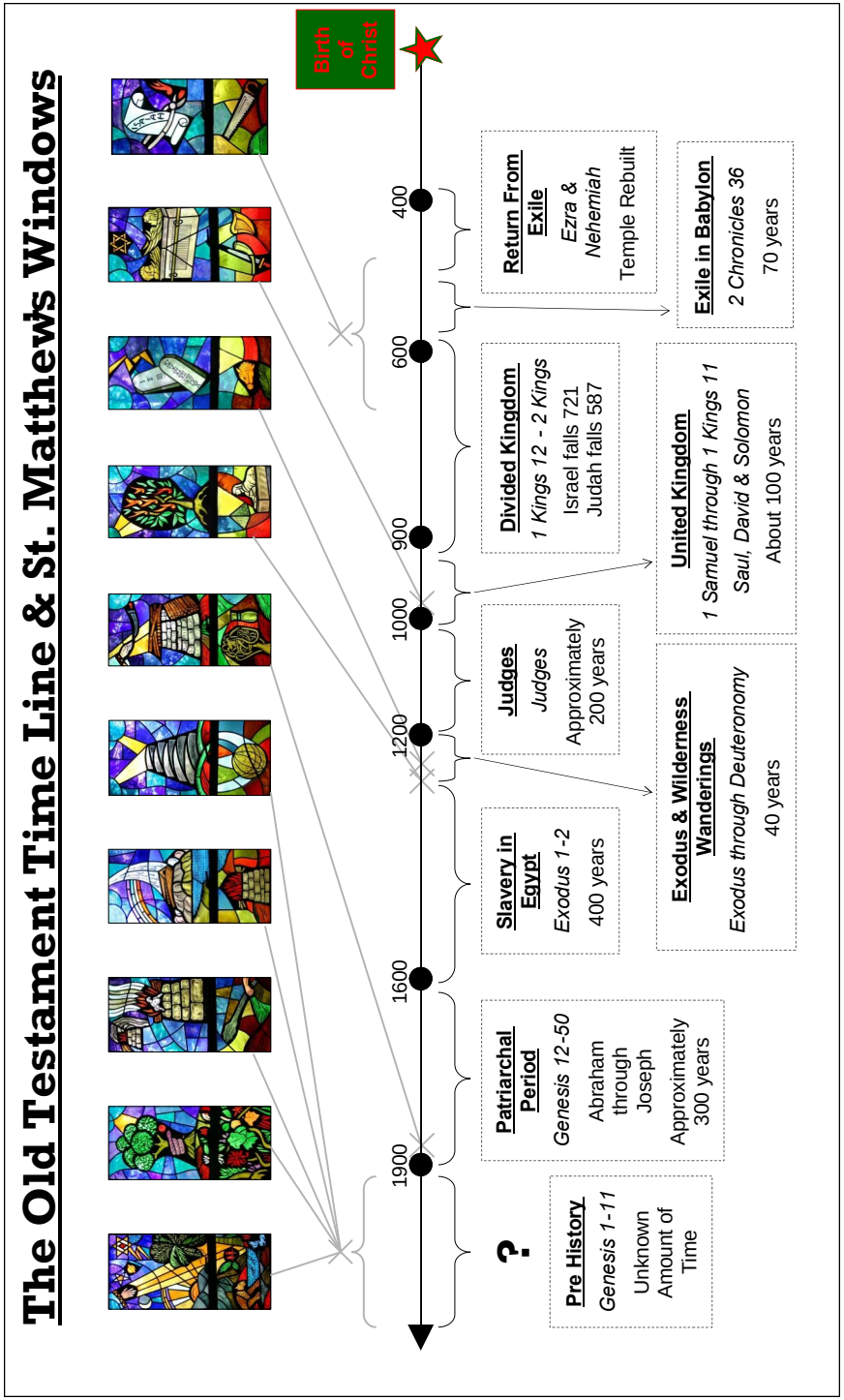
An often missed detail of this familiar story is the effect of the transgression and Godôs reaction of grace. When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, they suddenly realized their own nakedness and hid themselves from each other and from God (Gen. 3:7-20). The effect of their sin was shame. But God, though angry with their disobedience, provided means for them to deal with their shame and made garments for them out of animal skins (Gen. 3:21). God graced them despite their sin.

The Biblical Narrative

The narrative of the Bible can be divided into periods. It is always important to ascertain the historical context of stories of scripture in order to fully understand them. A basic outline of the Biblical narrative appears below.

Period/*Key People*	Corresponding Biblical Books
Pre History	
Adam & Eve	Genesis 1-11
Cain & Abel	
Noah	
Patriarchs	
Abraham	Genesis 12-50
Isaac/Jacob/Joseph	
Exodus & Wilderness Wanderings	
Moses/Aaron	Exodus/Numbers/Deuteronomy
The Conquest	
Joshua	Joshua
Judges	
Ehud/Deborah/Gideon	Judges
United Kingdom	
Saul/David/Solomon	1&2 Samuel/1 Kings
Divided Kingdom	
Elijah/Elisha	2 Kings
Exile & Return	
Ezra/Nehemiah	Esther/Ezra/Nehemiah
400 Years of Silence	
Gospels	
Jesus & Disciples	Matthew/Mark/Luke/John
The Church	
Peter & Paul	Acts
You	

The above chart incorporates only 18 of the 66 books of the Bible. The remaining books are very important, but it is these 18 books which tell us the Biblical story.



Old Testament Windows #3

Cain & Abel

The story of Cain and Abel is a well known story if nothing else for the oft quoted quip from Cain, ñAm I my brotherôs keeper?ò The story introduces violence and murder into the human situation.

Cain and Abel were the two sons of Adam and Eve. Cain worked the land while Abel raised sheep. As the story goes, they each brought an offering to God. For some unexplained reason, God liked Abelôs offering (altar with sheep and smoke rising up to heaven) but did not like Cainôs (altar with grain and smoke descending into the ground).

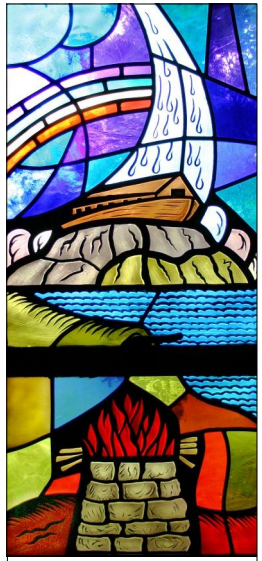
Rather than figure out what was wrong with his offering or changing the way he did things, Cain reacted with jealousy instead of with repentance. So he lured Abel out into the field and when he wasnôt looking, Cain ñrose up against him and killed himò (club at the bottom of the window).

Then God sought out Cain and asked him where his brother was. It was then that Cain gave his infamous response, ñAm I my brotherôs keeper?ò The answer to this rhetorical question, and a primary theme of the Bible, is yes, we are our brothersô keepers. Jesus put it differently: ñLove your neighbor as yourself.ò

Like in the story of the temptation in Eden, God offered grace despite Cainôs sin. Cain did indeed face consequences as a result of his transgression: banishment from the land he was farming. But when Cain expressed fear for his life, God marked him so that he would be protected from the violence of others. God offered grace.

It is perplexing as to why Cain thought others would harm him. Did he think theyôd be violent to him as a foreigner? Was he worried about people seeking vengeance for the homicide of his brother? Interestingly enough, Genesis four, where this story is recorded, concludes with Cain building the first city.

Old Testament Windows #4



The Flood

The story of Noah and the Flood has become a favorite and in many ways has become romanticized. In actuality, it falls in line with the stories depicted in the previous two windows: it is a story of humanityôs sin and Godôs response. Unlike the previous windows, however, this window has clear signs of Godôs grace.

The flood was Godôs response to a world that was guilty of cosmic chaos. The beginning of Genesis 6 tells of the intermarriage of human women and ñsons of God.ò It is a vague and ambiguous explanation of widespread human evil. But the cosmic order was being upset and God was not happy.

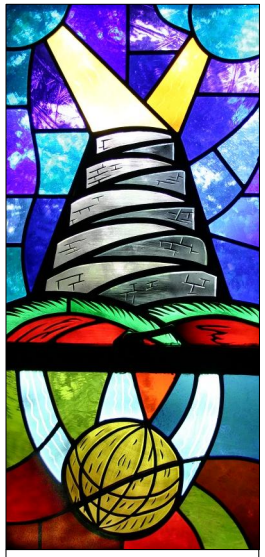
Noah is perhaps the first Biblical example of faithful response to God. God identified Noah as righteous and proceeded to inform him of the impending flood, giving him detailed instructions for building the ark and bringing on the animals (Gen. 6:11-21). Noahô s response is quite clear: ñNoah did this; he did all that God commanded him.ò (Gen. 6:22)

The flood, of course, happened. The details of the flood itself are recorded in Genesis 7 & 8. The window shows the ark atop Mt. Ararat where it came to a rest. The rainbow is the sign of grace, for God promised afterwards to never again destroy the earth in such a way and placed the bow in the sky as a sign of this promise (Gen. 9:8-17).

An often forgotten but very important part of the flood story is depicted in the bottom panel of the window. After Noah got off the ark, he built an altar and offered burnt offerings to God. The odor was very pleasing to God (Gen. 8:20-22).

These early stories of the Bible establish a cyclical pattern of the relationship between humanity and God: humans sin - consequences occur - grace happens. This pattern continues throughout the Bible.

Old Testament Windows #5



Tower of Babel

The story of the Tower of Babel is the final episode of the portion of the Biblical story which is often referred to as "prehistory." This part of the narrative is in the first eleven chapters of Genesis and concludes with the introduction of Abraham - the father of faith.

The story of the Tower of Babel tells of how the people of the earth, all of whom spoke one language, came together in one city and built a tower into the heavens to bring notoriety to themselves. They were concerned about being scattered throughout the earth. God was displeased with their actions and confused their language so that they could not understand one another. Then in an ironic twist, God scattered the people throughout the earth. The very thing they were trying to prevent by building the tower turned out to be a consequence of building the tower.

Traditional interpretation of this episode has pointed to their desire for glory as the sin of the people. Glory belongs to God not to people. So in their desire to build their reputation as great, the people were trying to supplant God. This may be true, but the peopleôs desire for uniformity also seemed to be a concern to God. So Godôs response was to introduce diversity into humanity.

This is the final of four episodes that follow the pattern of human sin - consequences - grace. However, this one does not conclude with an act of grace. This story concludes the series of narratives that paint a picture of the human predicament and set up the rest of the Biblical narrative. Ultimately, the rest of the Bible is the grace that occurs to conclude this story. Most immediately this grace comes as faith, particularly the faith of Abraham. But ultimately, that is what the rest of the Bible is about. It is indeed, the book of faith.

Old Testament Windows Pre History

The first eleven chapters of Genesis tell the story of creation and then describe the human-divine relationship as a cyclical pattern of sin-consequences-grace:

EVENT	SIN	CONSEQUENCE	GRACE
The Fall	Disobedience	Shame	Clothing
Cain & Abel	Murder	Banishment	Marked
The Flood	Cosmic Chaos	Destruction	Promise/Rainbow
Tower of Babel	Pride	Scattered	**?**

The final episode, sets up the story of faith which begins with Abraham and continues through the Biblical narrative.

The St. Matthewôs windows include all of these episodes as they tell the story of faith.

Old Testament Windows Altars

The altar was the original focus of worship. It was a place where animals were sacrificed and burned, and also where grain offerings were burned. Jesus changed the altar from a place of sacrifice to a table for dining.

Old Testament Windows #6

Abraham & Isaac

The first eleven chapters of Genesis tell the story of the beginning of time and describe the human dilemma through four important stories. The story of faith and God's personal relationship with humanity begins in Genesis 12 with the call of Abram (later to become Abraham).

The St. Matthew's windows characterize Abraham through the story of his near sacrifice of Isaac, his only son with Sarah (Gen. 22:1-19). In an inexplicable test of Abraham, God told him to take Isaac and offer him as a burnt offering in the mountains of Morriah. Abraham followed instructions, taking Isaac up a mountain, building an altar, preparing wood for the fire, tying Isaac up and even going as far as raising a dagger to stab him (altar, wood and knife in top window panel). But before he went through with it, God intervened (hand from sky) providing a ram caught in the thicket to take Isaac's place on the altar.

This is a good story to sum up Abraham as it shows Abraham's great trust and obedience to God. However, many have been disturbed by it, asking why God would test Abraham in such a manner in the first place. Yet God provided the ram to take Isaac's place. Later in the Biblical narrative, God provides salvation for the Israelites via the sacrificial Passover lamb, and, not even sparing His own Son, provides the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Old Testament Windows #7

Moses

The next great figure of faith was Moses. His story starts in Egypt (bottom window panel) where the descendents of Abraham lived in slavery. Moses was saved from a genocidal Pharaoh in a story that is echoed in the New Testament when the child Jesus is saved from the evil hands of Herod (compare Exodus 2:1-10 with Matthew 1:18-2:23).

The St. Matthew's window entitled "Moses" depicts the story of Moses' call. Moses had actually fled Egypt for Midian after he committed murder (Ex. 2:11-25). One day, while out tending his father-in-law's sheep, Moses came across a bush that was on fire but not being consumed (top panel - Exodus 3:2). It turns out that the fire was the very presence of God (see p. 28 about flames and God's presence).

From the bush came God's voice calling Moses to save God's people from Egypt. Despite Moses' bold objections, God would not take "no" for an answer (Ex. 3:1-4:17), and Moses became the first "savior" of the Bible.

The story of Moses' call repeats a theme that began with Abraham - God does not choose people because of their moral righteousness. Abraham was chosen even though he was worshipping other gods (Joshua 24:2), and Moses was chosen even though he was a murderer (Ex. 2:12). There is no explanation how or why God chooses particular people, but it is clear that their righteousness in relation to God comes from their faith in God and not their moralistic worthiness.

The Ten Commandments

After saving them from Egypt, Godôs new relationship with the Israelites is defined through two main vehicles: covenant and law.

God made a one-sided promise with Abraham, promising many descendants (Abraham and Sarah were childless at the time), that his descendants would be given a land (the promised land), and that his descendants would be a blessing to the entire earth (Gen 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-22).

Through Moses, God introduced the second primary medium of relating to Godôs chosen people: the law. With the introduction of the law, the covenant now becomes two-sided.

The story of Moses going up Mt. Sinai to receive the law was made famous in the epic 1956 film that shares its name with the eighth St. Matthewôs window. After the Israelitesô exodus from Egypt following the ten plagues (Exodus 7-12), they were camped around Mt. Sinai. Moses went up the mountain to speak with God who appeared in a thick cloud with thunder and lightning (lighting bolt at top of window - Exodus 19:16). It was then that God gave the law for the people to follow which would separate them from the other peoples of the earth. It consisted of 630 laws, of which the ten commandments are the most universal and everlasting laws (tablets - Exodus 19-31).

In an ironic tragedy, the people down below were busy breaking the first commandment before it was even given to them. The Israelites convinced Aaron to make for them an idol out of gold in the shape of a calf, and they were worshipping it (golden calf head in bottom pane - Exodus 32). This angered both God, who wanted to wipe all of them out except Moses, and Moses, who smashed the tablets. Moses talked God out of his wrath, and God redid the tablets for the people.

Ark of the Covenant

Once the Israelites had the law, a worthy home for these most holy of tablets needed to be found. They were placed in a highly ornamented ark whose charge was in the hands of the priests. For the Israelites, the ark contained the very presence of God.

The travels of the ark of the covenant are fascinating. While wandering in the wilderness, an entire tabernacle (large tent like structure) was created to house it (Exodus 26). When the Israelites entered the holy land and the priests carrying the ark entered into the Jordan River, the waters were split allowing the people to cross over on dry land (Joshua 3:14-17). The ark led Joshua into battle (Joshua 6:6). And finally, it created havoc for other peoples when they captured it and placed it next to their idols (1 Samuel 5).

The St. Matthewôs window named Ark of the Covenant depicts the ark in the time of King David. David was the one responsible for bringing the ark to Jerusalem, establishing Jerusalem not only as the capital city, but also as the holy city of God. Thus the window also has many symbols depicting David including the star of David at the top, the harp at the bottom (David is credited with writing 73 of the Psalms), and the horn and sword depicting his conquests.

Davidôs son Solomon built a temple as the ñpermanentò home for the ark of the covenant. The cubicle where it was housed was called the ñHoly of Holiesò and was considered so sacred that only the high priest could enter it once per year.

The effect of the temple was a uniform place of worship for Abrahamôs descendents. However, it neglected one of the key features of the ark: the handles. It is intended to be very portable. God is not bound to a single place, but goes forth with the chosen people. People are not expected to come to God, God comes to them.

Old Testament Windows #10

Isaiah

Beginning with the rise of the kings in Israel, the primary medium by which God communicated with the people shifted from speaking to the leaders (judges & kings) to speaking through the prophets.

The prophets that we know the most about are Elijah and Elisha, whose activities in the Northern Kingdom of Israel are described in 2 Kings. We also know a fair amount about Nathan and Samuel (some label Samuel as a judge rather than prophet).

The prophets listed above, however, are narrative prophets. The job of a prophet is to bring the word of God to either the leaders or to God's people. The only words we know of that the narrative prophets spoke are contained within the narrative episodes about them.

In regard to the literary prophets, on the other hand, we know much of their words but little of their actions. The literary prophets are credited with writing down their words. Many of the books of the Old Testament are from these literary prophets.

Among the most reknowned of these prophets is Isaiah whose book is the longest of the prophetic books. The final of the Old Testament Windows is titled "Isaiah," the scroll bearing his name being the most prominent picture. The tongs with the burning coal recall the vision which has become known as Isaiah's call (Isaiah 6:1-8).

There is a tradition from the non Biblical books *Ascension of Isaiah* and *Lives of the Prophets* which say Isaiah was martyred at the hands of King Manasseh by being sawed in two, thus the saw at the bottom of the window.

New Testament Windows #11

Nativity

It should be no surprise that the New Testament windows begin with the Christmas story. This window is entitled "Nativity" and incorporates elements from both of the birth narratives recorded in the gospels (Matthew 2:1-12 and Luke 2:1-20).

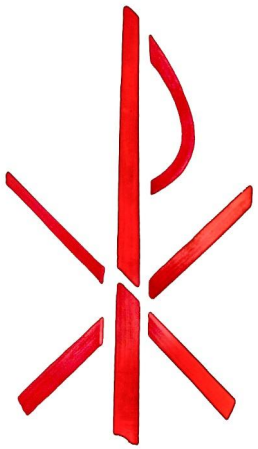
The birth narrative in Luke tells of the birth in the manger due to the no vacancy sign on the inn. Shepherds are the first to see the new born child after being told of his birth by an angel. Central to the window is the manger with Mary kneeling beside it. Christ is represented by the Chi-Rho symbol interwoven within the picture (see page 18 regarding the Chi-Rho symbol) . Three shepherd crooks can be seen emanating from the right side of the manger.

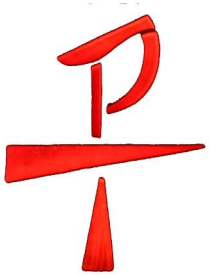
Matthew records the birth narrative from the view point of Joseph and incorporates the visit by the magi. No one knows for sure exactly what a magi is. Some have surmised that they were astrologers, some magicians. One tradition, including the popular song, labels them as kings. The three crowns at the bottom of the window represent the magi.

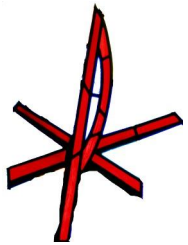
The magi were following a star which they believed would lead to a new king. The star in the upper left, as well as the green cross in the background, foreshadow what was to come for Jesus. The crown in the manger from which the Chi-Rho emerges represents Jesus as the new king they were seeking.

A common misconception is that the magi came to the manger as did the shepherds. They did not, they visited much later. Matthew tells us the magi visited the Christ child in the house where the holy family was staying (Matthew 2:11). Jesus could have been as much as two years old when they visited (Matthew 2:16).

Very early on the Greek letter Rho (ρ) superimposed over Chi (χ) became shorthand for Christ. These are the first two letters of Christos (χριστος) in Greek. The St. Matthewôs windows utilize this symbol throughout for Jesus. All the Chi-Rhos pictured on this page can be found in the New Testament windows.







Christ in the Temple

We know very little about Jesusôyouth and young adult years. Except for references to the fact that he is from Nazareth, the only thing we know about his youth is the curious account of being left behind at the temple from Luke 2. It is this story that is depicted in the second New Testament window ñChrist in the Temple.ò

As the story goes, Jesusôparents took him to Jerusalem for the Passover when he was 12 years old. This would probably have been a common pilgrimage for Jews living in Galilee at the time. As they were heading back, after a day into the trip, Jesusôparents suddenly realized he was not with them. This certainly could happen as they were probably traveling with a large group from Nazareth. At 12 years old, especially in that culture, Jesus was expected to be responsible enough to be with the group.

The story, however, is not about the negligence of Mary and Joseph or about the young Jesusôdisobedience (though parents ought to take comfort in knowing that it wasnôt even easy to raise the son of God!), but it is about Jesusôgrowth in the faith. Jesusô parents found him in the temple among the teachers, listening and asking questions, which is illustrated in the window by the Chi-Rho (see previous page) between the pillars. Presumably they were discussing the Jewish scriptures shown by the scroll at bottom of the window. The lantern above the Chi-Rho symbolizes wisdom and reflects both the amazement of all those in the temple at Jesusôanswers (Luke 2:47), as well as Lukeôs summary statement after the story: ñJesus increased in wisdom and yearsé ò(Luke 2:52).

Baptism of Jesus

All four gospels begin Jesusô ministry at the Jordan River with Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist (though in Johnôs gospel there is never an actual description of Jesus being baptized). The common elements that appear in the other three gospel accounts are illustrated in the third of St. Matthewôs New Testament windows.

Jesus, again represented by the Chi-Rho, came to the Jordan to be baptized by John. After being baptized, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove, shown clearly at the top of the window. Then a voice came from the heavens saying, ñYou are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleasedò (Mark 1:11 - the words vary slightly in the other accounts). This is shown in the window by the clouds in the upper left and the light rays emanating out of them.

The artist has also incorporated into this window an ancient Christian symbol that is being reclaimed in many ways in todayôs world. In the waters of the Jordan two fish are shown. The fish, or *ichthus* (ιχθυς) in Greek, served as an anagram for Christians. The first letters of the word for fish correspond to the first letters of key Christian words as follows:

ι for ιησους or Jesus
χ for χριστος or Christ
θ for θεος or God
υ for υιος or Son
σ for σωτηρ or Savior

Thus the term ichthus is an anagram for ñJesus Christ, Godôs Son our Savior.ò The fish are also an appropriate symbol for Christians since they are water creatures. It is only through the waters of baptism that God calls us and saves us and makes us able to proclaim Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, our Savior.

Calling the Disciples

It wasnôt long at all after Jesusô baptism that news about him began to spread far and wide, so that great crowds gathered wherever he went. Before long, Jesus started picking out specific people and calling them to be his disciples. A disciple is a student who takes up after his/her teacher and follows in virtually every sense of the word.

The window entitled ñCalling the Disciplesò picks up on the metaphor Jesus used when calling some fishermen, ñFollow me, and I will make you fish for peopleò (Matthew 4:19). At the center of this window is a net symbolizing this metaphor. Instead of the Chi-Rho which is utilized in many of the windows, the Latin abbreviation for Jesus is used (see box below).

From the many disciples who followed, Jesus appointed twelve of them as apostles (Luke 6:12-16). An apostle is one who is sent. Jesus sent these twelve out to spread the gospel and to cast out demons and to cure diseases (Luke 9:1-2). Surrounding the fishing net are twelve crosses representing the twelve apostles. Tradition says that all the apostles (except for John) were martyred, many of them being crucified as was Jesus.

IHS
Another ancient symbol for Jesus. Originates from Latin:
Iesus **H**omonium **S**alvator
Jesus Savior of Man

In the bottom panel of the window the artist has placed a boat on the sea. Certainly this could further the ñfishing for peopleò metaphor and might indicate that many of the disciples were fishermen. But it also alludes to the fact that much of Jesusô ministry revolved around the sea of Galilee, and that many of his miracles involved the sea, including casting the legion of demons into the sea (Luke 8:26-39), calming the storm (Mark 4:35-41), walking on water (Matthew 14:22-33) and miraculous catches of fish (Luke 5:1-11 & John 21:1-11).

New Testament Windows #15

Loaves and Fish

Jesus performed many miracles during his ministry. But none were better known than the feeding miracles. In fact, the feeding of 5000 is one of the only miracle recorded in all four gospels. It is appropriate then, that the one window that depicts Jesusô miracles is the one entitled ñLoaves and Fish.ò

At the center of this window are two fish with a basket full of bread loaves and a crown above it. These represent Jesusôtwo great feeding miracles. In the first feeding story he fed 5000 with just five loaves of bread and two fish. Afterwards twelve basketfuls of leftovers were collected. Many have suggested the that twelve baskets symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel.

The second feeding miracle took place in the Decapolis (Gentile territory) where Jesus fed 4000 with seven loaves and a few fish. Afterwards, seven baskets were collected. Some have suggested that the seven left over baskets (seven being the number of completeness) symbolize the entirety of the world.

The crown above the basket represents Jesus in this window. The royal imagery is appropriate as the mark of a good king is whether his subjects have food on their table. In these miracles, Jesus is fulfilling the kingly role of providing for his people.

The chalice and grapes at the bottom of the window illustrate the similarity between these feedings and the last supper. Just like in feeding of the 5000, at the last supper, Jesus *took* bread, *blessed* it, *broke* it and *gave* it to the disciples. The only variant in the feeding of the 4000 from this pattern is that he ñgave thanksò instead of ñblessedòthe bread. But even so, the Greek word for give thanks is eucharist, which is often used as a title for the sacrament of the table.

New Testament Windows #16

Transfiguration

The transfiguration, a spectacular event that is told by Matthew, Mark and Luke, is the turning point for Jesusôministry in all three of these gospels. Prior to the transfiguration the focus is on Jesusômiraculous works and his teaching. Afterwards the focus turns toward Jerusalem and his impending death. Luke makes this most obvious when he writes, ñWhen the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.ò(Luke 9:51)

The story of the transfiguration takes place on an unnamed mountain where Jesus has brought Peter and James and John to pray. While Jesus was praying he was ñtransfiguredò(changed in appearance - the Greek word from which we get metamorphosis), his clothes turning dazzling white and his face shining like the sun. This is shown in the window by the light bursts emanating from the Chi-Rho.

Immediately after his transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared and were talking with Jesus. They are represented by the tablets (Moses) and the scroll (Elijah), and it is usually interpreted that these are the two men chosen because they symbolize ñthe law and the prophets.òLuke tells us that they were talking with Jesus about his departure (exodus in Greek - Luke 9:31), echoing the great salvation event of the Old Testament.

After Peter made a rather awkward comment, a cloud engulfed the men on the mountain and, like at Jesusôbaptism, a voice came out of the heavens with a similar message: ñThis is my son, my Chosen; listen to him!ò(Luke 9:35) As a result, the ray coming from the upper right of the window is similar to the one in the baptism window.

New Testament Windows #17

Lord's Supper

The night before Jesusô death, he was gathered with his disciples celebrating the Passover meal. It is at this meal that Jesus instituted the sacrament of Holy Communion and is the subject of the seventh New Testament window.

While they were celebrating the Passover, Jesus took a loaf of bread, blessed it and broke it and gave it to his disciples saying, ñThis is my body.ò After supper, he took a cup of wine, gave thanks and gave it to his disciples saying ñThis is my blood.ò Central to this window are a loaf and a chalice with the Chi-Rho symbol at top as if it is coming right out to the cup. The exact nature of Christôs presence within the bread and wine at the last supper and at the sacramental table today are a matter of great theological debate, but undoubtedly something very special happened at the Last Supper and Christ is present in very special way at the communion table.

Perhaps the specialness is symbolized by the table with a white cloth over it. At Passover, the body and blood that saves is that of the sacrificial lamb. It would have been upon a stone altar that the lamb would have been slaughtered. But now, Jesus takes the place of that lamb (the ñLamb of God who takes away the sin of the worldò- John 1:29) and turns the altar into a table fit for dining.

In the bottom portion of the window a money bag, surrounded by 30 pieces of silver is pictured. This references the betrayal of Judas which was to take place shortly after the meal in the Garden of Gethsemane. The liturgical ñWords of Institutionò begin, ñIn the night in which he was betrayedé ò

New Testament Windows #18

Crucifixion

The ñCrucifixionòwindow is filled with elements from the passion of Jesus. In fact, many observers have looked at the red oval panels at the foot of the cross as a heart symbolizing Jesusôpassion. It is unknown whether this was the artists intention or not.

The large cross that is at the center of the top portion of the window is Jesusôcross, complete with the sign on the top using the initial letters in Latin of the four words that were inscribed on his cross: ñJesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.ò Jesusôcross is flanked on the right and the left by the two crosses on which hung the two thieves crucified with him.

Jesus was on the cross from nine in the morning until three in the afternoon. The yellow circle with the black center to the lower left of the cross bar and the moon to the upper right of the cross bar symbolize the darkness that covered the land from noon until three.

While Jesus was on the cross, one of the things he cried out was ñI thirst.ò Upon hearing this, someone put a sponge on a stick and dipped in a jar of sour wine that was nearby and held it up for Jesus. These are illustrated on the bottom.

As it got dark, the centurions needed to make sure the men being crucified were dead. Normally they break the legs with a club and the shock kills the man. But seeing that Jesus had already died, they pierced his side with a spear (shown at the bottom of the window). Blood and water came out. The water is probably a reference to baptism and may echo Paulôs theology: ñDo you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?ò (Romans 6:3)

New Testament Windows #19

Resurrection

The central event for Christianity is the Easter event - the resurrection. The ñResurrectionò window, though it does have some elements of the Easter morning accounts, is more of a pictorial representation of the victory Christ won than a depiction of the Biblical story of the resurrection.

Jesus was buried in a tomb with a stone rolled in front of it. On Easter morning, women found that tomb empty. Instead of showing the empty tomb, the artist has placed an empty casket in the picture with a cross turned into flag pole coming out of it. The flag is a victory flag. Jesus has taken the cross, an instrument of death, and made it into the instrument of his victory - victory over death. As Paul says: ñFor the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.ò(1 Corinthians 1:18)

The sun rising in the background certainly may allude to the women coming to the tomb early in the morning, but it is also a daily reminder of resurrection. For the darkness of the night is always broken by the light of the morning sun - even when the sky is cloudy.

The window is not completely void of elements from the Biblical resurrection accounts, however. In the bottom panel are the helmet and sword representing the Roman soldiers assigned to guard the tomb who ñshook and became like dead menòwhen the angel appeared at the tomb (Matthew 28:4). The yellow wing coming up from the top right corner of the casket must symbolize the angel who rolled the stone away and announced Jesusô resurrection to the women.

New Testament Windows #20

Pentecost

The final New Testament window marks the birth of the Church. Though it begins with the disciples who followed Jesus as he walked the earth, it brings the Biblical story up to the present time and the people sitting in the pews. The ñPentecostòwindow illustrates the supernatural event that occurred fifty days after the resurrection but also makes an important symbolic link to baptism.

The spectacular entry of the Holy Spirit into the lives of followers of Jesus took place during the Jewish festival of Pentecost. A celebration that often coincided with the harvest, Pentecost, which means fifty, took place fifty days after the Passover. During the Pentecost celebration following the very first Easter, the disciples, who were gathered together in a room, were filled with Holy Spirit via a strong wind and tongues of fire that came down upon each of them. Thus the flames take center stage on ñPentecostò window. There are seven of them, indicating not that there were seven disciples, but that the Holy Spirit is for the entire world as seven is the number of completeness.

The dove above the flames recalls Jesusôbaptism when the Holy Spirit came in the form of the dove. It serves as the connection between baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit, reminding present day Christians that they bear Christôs spirit in the world just like those who experienced the first Pentecostal event.

The thurible with burning incense at the bottom of the window is another connector of the then and now. Presumably the disciples were gathered in the room for prayer and worship just as we do each Sunday morning. The incense symbolizes our prayers rising up to the heavens. Godôs response is to send Christôs spirit down upon us.

New Testament Windows — The Flames

The artist who designed the windows was very astute in the use of flames. There are numerous occasions in the Bible when Godôs presence is within fire. The two most prominent are the burning bush and the tongues of fire of Pentecost. In each of those occasions, the fire was burning but it was not consuming what was ablaze. Other memorable times when Godôs presence came via this unconsuming fire include the pillar of fire that led the Israelites to Mt. Sinai and the fire in the furnace that did not burn Danielôs friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

In the St. Matthewôs windows, whenever fire represents the presence of God, the artist used individual flames which are best labeled as tongues in accordance with the Pentecost story. Windows that include this type of flame include the ñMosesòwindow (in the burning bush), the ñIsaiahòwindow (the burning coal from Isaiahôs vision), the ñChrist in the Templeòwindow (the lamp which represents the Old Testament concept of Wisdom) and the ñPentecostòwindow.

The flames on the ñCain & Abelòwindow and the ñFloodò window, which include altars on which offerings are being burnt, are decidedly different and look nothing like tongues of fire.

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

Proclaiming and Living
The Good News of Jesus

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