

As we are called and created to worship God, we must realize that we cannot truly worship that which we do not know. To attempt to do so reduces the act to a mere emotion-based superstition, not unlike pagan religion.

Jesus said, *“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must do so in Spirit and in Truth.”* It is imperative that if we are to truly worship God, we must be increasing in our understanding of His attributes, acts and ways. The more we know Him, the more we can *“ascribe to Him the glory due His name”* (Psalm 29).

The stained glass window above the baptistry has been designed with the purpose of uplifting the beauty and attributes of Jesus.

In designing and executing these pieces, the creators have only become all the more overwhelmed with their own unworthiness to even attempt to illustrate such an indescribable Majesty. However, we submit them to God with the prayer that He will be pleased to use them to bring further illumination of His Glorious Being to His Redeemed Beloved. We begin with:

Living Waters Jesus described Himself as the source of Living Water. In John 4, He proclaims, *“...whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”* And again, in John 7, *“He who believes in Me...From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

In the midst of the window we see a river, symbol of the poured out life of the Savior, emanating from the open, empty tomb, itself a symbol of His victory over death and the power that is His to bring about whatever He promises. As we acknowledge His death for us and identify in His sacrifice, it is then that we begin to drink from this Living Water. In so doing, we are given both life and the opportunity to be a vessel carrying that water to a dry and thirsty world. *“As a deer pants for the waterbrooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God”* (Psalm 42); *“Thou dost give them to drink of the river of Thy delights, for with Thee is the fountain of life and in Thy light we see light”* (Psalm 36).

Plants & Flowers Among the many pictures of Himself that God has given us in His word, plants are often used to reveal Himself and His redemptive work toward mankind. Some of these have been selected



Symbolism in Stained Glass

by Linda Lamp



Linda Lamp, with valuable counsel and assistance from artist Sherry Waters, designed the Stained Glass Window in the Worship Center at Central Christian Church, Wichita, Kansas.

to fill the lower third of the window. At the base of the cross and surrounding the tree are plants from which the precious oils, myrrh and frankincense, were derived. These costly oils were two of the gifts of the Magi upon visiting the Holy Child and were symbolic of His divinity and His death.

Frankincense, (or Olibanum) from the Boswellia tree or shrub, at the base of the cross, was the perfume of the sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, which, when burnt emitted a fragrant odor. This incense became an emblem of the prayers of the priests and later the saints rising up before the throne of God. *“May my prayer be counted as incense before Thee; the lifting of my hands as the evening*

sacrifice” (Psalms 141:2). In Malachi 1:11, it is even associated with the Name of God as He says, *“For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, My name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name....”*

Myrrh is also secured from the same plant as frankincense as well as the rock rose, with small, starlike white or pink blooms. All of the shrubs give their resin as a result of a cut or crushing of their stems. The resin is then used as a balm for spice, perfume, medicine and even embalming. Myrrh is the principle ingredient in the holy anointing oil, and therefore is a symbol both of the Kingship and the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus. It is a blessing to realize that, like Christ, *“by His wounds we were healed,”* these lowly plants yield their healing and soothing resins as a result of the “wounding” of their flesh.

Across the lower part of the window are crocus, most likely the “Rose of Sharon” referred to in the Song of Solomon. This flower has traditionally been used to represent Christ, however a closer look at the passage reveals that it is the Shunamite girl that is speaking in Song of Solomon 2:1, who says, *“I am the Rose of Sharon, the lily of the valleys.”* The Shunamite girl represents the Bride of Christ, as she acknowledges her unworthiness. The groom (representing Christ) proclaims, *“You are a lily among thistles!”* This lily is a probable reference to the stately white “Madonna Lily.” In our natural and sinful state, we have no worth, but when purchased by the blood of Christ, He imputes to us a value that is greater than we could ever imagine. It’s interesting to note that in the Middle East, the red “Sultan’s Cap Lily” is often found growing among the “Madonna Lilies” making a wonderful picture of the relationship of Christ with His Bride, the Church.

Trees The Bible is filled with references to trees and their significance. The tree in the foreground is an olive tree, representative of the life, suffering and resurrection of our Lord. We remember that it was among the olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane that He spent His last night in agonizing prayer before His crucifixion.

Many of the trees growing in the Holy Land today date back thousands of years. Even though the land was desecrated in the 16th century by the Turkish invasion and all the trees were cut to the ground, the olive trees continued on back



sprang back to life and are testimonies today of the resurrection of our Lord (see Job 14:7).

This tree could also represent the man of Psalm 1, planted by streams of living water which is the Word of God, indeed Christ Himself, that Word incarnate. As we abide in Him and constantly partake of His life-giving stream, He enables us to be fruitful all our days. It is more likely, though that the tree referenced in the psalm is the palm tree in the distance, for a palm more accurately represents the life of the righteous man. The life of the palm is in the center of the tree, rather than around the outside, therefore, no matter what happens to the exterior, it will not affect the real life of the tree. *“Though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day”* (II Corinthians 4:16). The palm tree is also characterized by giving fruit in its old age (Psalm 71:18).

As wonderful as it is to meditate upon the tree as a symbol of the fruitfulness of our life in Christ, it is even more sublime to anticipate the glorious beauty of the Tree of Life planted in the midst of...

Heaven *“There is a river that makes glad the city of God, the holy dwelling places of the Most High God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved...”* (Psalm 46); *“And He showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations”* (Revelations 22:1-2).

Not only will we have full access to the Tree of Life (from which we were banished following the first transgression, eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil), and the ever flowing presence of the Living Water, but we will abide in the presence of the Lamb of God who is the Light of the World.

“And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants serve Him; and they shall see His face and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them and they shall reign forever and ever” (Revelations 22:3-5).

The Scripture is so filled with detail describing heaven that it was difficult to select just a few to contain in this window. It is the hope of the artists that you will search the

Scriptures yourself to meditate on all that the *“Lord hath prepared for them that love Him.”*

However, in addition to the Tree of Life and the River, we have represented the Lamb-lit buildings of gold and precious stones with seven of the twelve doors or gates, with a jasper-like glow, the emerald rainbow that surrounds the throne of the Lamb (Revelations 4:3). Super-imposed on the upper part of the blood-red arch are the golden crowns, harps and vials of the twenty-four elders who stand around the throne singing, *“Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God to receive glory and honor and power, for Thou didst create all things and for Thy glory they are and were created”* (Revelations 4:11) and *“Worthy art Thou to take the book and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation”* (Revelations 5:9).

How blessed it is to realize that the vials of the elders contain the incense of the “prayers of the saints.” Is this not a supreme encouragement to “pray without ceasing” as our most vital and eternal work for the Lord? How precious are our prayers to Him that He would have them contained in golden vials around His throne! Then these crowns, along with any of our own, will be cast in reverent, thankful worship at the nail-scarred feet of our Savior.

Arch & Borders The archway is of blood-red glass to signify the only Door by which we can enter into the eternal life of Christ and His glorious heaven. Aside from the blood of the Lamb, there is no payment for sin and we are condemned to a life of eternity without God. But praise be to the Lamb for pouring out His life so that all who will may enter in. A grapevine is entwined around the arch with nine clusters of grapes. This signifies the eternal fruit to be borne in the life of a blood-bought saint as we abide in the One who calls Himself the “Vine,” without which we can do nothing, but in Whom all things are possible.

The outermost border is of purple to represent the royalty of the King of Kings. There is a snuffed-out candle in the lower left-hand border. The old masters often used this image to signify that the Holy Spirit was present in the room and that with His illumination no other light was needed.

The middle border is divided into twelve segments. These represent the foundation stones of heaven. They are the same stones

that were in the breastplate of the High Priests garments and are supposed to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. They are, beginning at the bottom: jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase, jacinth and amethyst.

The Cross The open cross which defines the window is outlined in gold, the precious metal that is always associated with God: in the tabernacle, the temple and in heaven.

Gold is the standard for our medium of exchange. As such, the cross was the “medium of exchange” God used to allow His Son to purchase us from the grip of the enemy resulting in the Great Exchange: our sinfulness for His holiness. *“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”* (II Corinthians 5:21).

Just beneath the arms of the cross, are the three crosses of Calvary. One cross represents the redemption possible when we place our hope and trust in the Lord Jesus; another represents the humble cry of a repentant sinner, who will be with Him in eternity, while the third represents the tragic rebellion of the prideful world destined for an eternity of despair because of their rejection of the matchless love of the Savior. Calvary has divided all of time. It is the pivotal event of History and divides all mankind, now and forever.

At the top of the cross is the crown of the Lamb, with many diadems signifying His purity (white), His redemptive work (red), His eternal life (green), and His faithfulness (blue). The letters on each arm are the beginning and ending of the Greek alphabet, by which Jesus proclaims His all-inclusiveness, *“I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city.”*

Caught in the other arm of the cross is the Bright and Morning Star, which Jesus calls Himself in the closing chapter of Revelation, just before He, with His bride, says...

“Come...and let the one who is thirsty come: let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost...for behold I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done... Yes, I am coming quickly” (Revelation 22:12, 16, 20-21). ■

