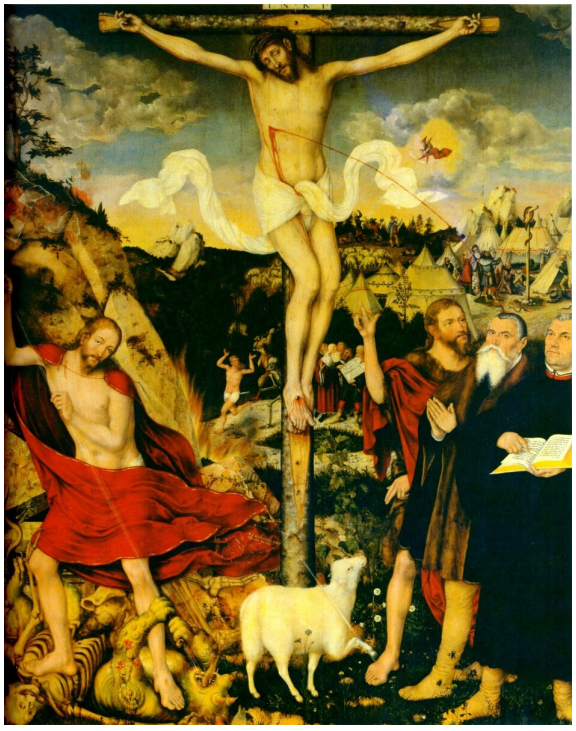
Lucas Cranach the Younger, *Christ on the Cross* (c. 1555)

Abstract

This is the central panel of a triptych forming the altarpiece of the Weimar parish church of St. Peter and Paul, one of the flagship churches of the Reformation. The triptych was commissioned as an epitaph for John Frederick of Saxony and his family, who are depicted on the two side panels. Long though to be Lucas Cranach the Elder's last work, recent research has shown it to be the work of his son, Lucas Cranach the Younger.

In its didactic rather than devotional nature, the Weimar altarpiece is a prime example of the Reformation's visual propaganda. It is composed of a number of different scenes (approved by Luther himself) that explain the meaning of Christ's death and that combine to form an elaborate allegory of salvation. Cranach the Elder (second from right) and Luther (far right) stand next to John the Baptist (third from right) in the foreground of the panel. Luther points to a passage in the open bible, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us of all sins." The blood spouting from Christ's wound falls on Cranach's head, thus offering a literal illustration of the biblical text.

Source



Source: Lucas Cranach the Younger, *Christ on the Cross*, central panel of the altarpiece in the Weimar Parish church St. Peter and Paul, oil on lime, c. 1555. Online available from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Weimaraltar-1555-B.jpg

Recommended Citation: Lucas Cranach the Younger, Christ on the Cross (c. 1555), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/from-the-reformations-to-the-thirty-years-war-1500-1648/ghdi:image-3320> [September 13, 2026].