



The round chapel of Langenburg Castle was built between 1617 and 1621 during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) under Count Philipp Ernst of Hohenlohe-Langenburg, before the birth of Johann Heinrich von Olnhausen (1623-1677).

Philipp Ernst had received Langenburg in 1610 during the Hohenlohe inheritance division and made it his residence. He then had the medieval castle expanded into a prestigious Renaissance palace. By 1616, the magnificent inner courtyard was essentially complete; the chapel was, in a sense, the spiritual culmination of this grand residential project. Hohenlohe and the Jagst Valley were only increasingly burdened by war and plague from 1621 onward. The Hohenlohe family was caught in the middle of the religious conflicts that led to the war. Philipp Ernst's brother, Georg Friedrich von Hohenlohe-Weikersheim, was among the leading military figures on the Bohemian-Palatinate side and fought against the imperial troops at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620. Following the defeat, the family came under immediate political pressure. However, the chapel survived not only the Thirty Years' War but also the great castle fire.

In the chapel, paintings are arranged on two superimposed galleries, relating the Old and New Testaments to one another. The lower gallery depicts the salvation history of the New Testament – beginning with the birth of Jesus (to the right of the pulpit) and proceeding clockwise to the Last Judgment. The upper gallery presents the Old Testament counterparts – beginning with the creation of Adam and culminating in the Flood and salvation by Noah's Ark. Behind the paintings, a cycle of biblical texts is painted on the wall. The biblical passages there are inscribed in the early modern style of the 17th century and quote the respective passages that serve as the basis for the paintings.

The juxtaposition follows the principle of so-called "typology," in which events or figures from the Old Testament are understood as models or foreshadowings of the New Testament. The iconographic program of Langenburg Castle Chapel is deliberately designed as a typological juxtaposition: On the first gallery, the story of Christ's salvation from the New Testament is depicted, while on the second gallery, above it, is a scene from the Old Testament, understood as **a premonition**. **In total, there are 16 + 16 images.**

No. New Testament	contrasted with a scene from the Old Testament
1. Birth of Jesus	and Adam in Paradise
2. Circumcision of Jesus	; Circumcision of Abraham
3. Visit of the Magi from the (Eastern Region)	Visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon
4. Presentation of Jesus in the Temple	Samuel is brought to Eli by his parents
5. Flight to Egypt:	Israel's flight from Egypt / Rescue at the Red Sea
6. The 12-year-old Jesus in the Temple	Eight men before a priest <i>Scene not yet definitively identified</i>
7. Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan	Naaman of Syria before the house of Elisha
8. Feeding of the Five Thousand	Manna in the Desert – the Bread from Heaven
9. The arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane;	Cain kills Abel
10. Institution of the Holy Eucharist	; Foundation of the Passover Meal
11. The Crucifixion of Jesus;	The Bronze Serpent of Moses
salvation	Salvation through contemplating the divinely ordained sign of
12. Burial of Jesus	: Jonah is vomited onto dry land by the fish (Death & Return)
13. Resurrection of Jesus	Samson breaks out of Gaza
14. Ascension of Jesus	Ascension of Elijah
15. Pentecost in Jerusalem (gift of the Holy Spirit)	Moses receives the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai
16. Last Judgment	Flood (also understood as a universal judgment)

The arrangement is taken from Martin Wissner's documentation of the 1983/84 restoration; he explicitly identifies the 16 Old Testament images as the "typological correspondences" of the 16 New Testament scenes. The selection of pairs becomes increasingly theological, not merely

narrative. Some pairs are immediately understandable (such as Nos. 8, 10, and 14). Others (such as Nos. 11, 15, and 16) are theologically sophisticated and require biblical knowledge. The viewer is thus compelled to move from mere observation to theological "deciphering."

The Old Testament narrative is not chronological. After manna and the desert come Cain, Abel, and finally the Flood. That would be nonsensical as a story. The order is determined solely by the life of Christ: Cain and Abel are included because they are associated with Christ's arrest; Passover follows as a counterpart to the Last Supper; the bronze serpent follows the crucifixion, and so on. The New Testament thus becomes the "key" with which the Old Testament is read. In this way, the Old Testament appears as a vast prefiguration of what is fulfilled in Christ—a readily accessible, reformatory interpretation of the Bible.

What's fascinating about the Langenburg Castle Chapel is that the paintings don't simply tell two parallel stories, but rather, through the typological connection of the Old and New Testaments, assert that the entire Bible is a single history of salvation. The Old Testament is consistently read in light of Christ. This is precisely what characterizes the programmatically Protestant nature of such church furnishings from the early 17th century.



A self-proclaimed Protestant Hohenlohe line in Langenburg: Burial of the princes in the church

The space transforms " **promise and fulfillment** " into a **visible source of confidence** . On the first gallery, the New Testament story of salvation unfolds, from the birth of Christ to the Last Judgment; above it, in the same arrangement, is the Old Testament counterpart. The corresponding biblical passages are also displayed on the wall panels. The visitor is thus encouraged to **see, compare , and read** the accompanying biblical text.

The entire iconographic program forms a vast arc from the beginning to the end of human history. It begins with Adam/the birth of Christ and ends with the Flood/Last Judgment. One

can interpret it as the classic Christian narrative: old Adam → Christ → redemption → final judgment. Within this arc, it is not simply "the life of Jesus" that is depicted, but a complete history of salvation from creation to its consummation.

And then there's the **stately architecture** : the upper gallery was only accessible from the prince's private apartment and not visible from below. The chapel thus serves simultaneously as a place of worship and **a representation of... The social order of the court, which is thus also presented as a divinely ordained position**, is further emphasized. Above all this is the alliance coat of arms of Philipp Ernst von Hohenlohe-Langenburg and Anna Maria zu Solms-Sonnenwalde. Biblical salvation history, the princely family, and the spatial hierarchy are thus brought together in a single space.

The chapel's iconographic program didn't simply emerge in a peaceful Renaissance world, but rather at the very moment when the confessional order of Europe was crumbling. On November 8, 1620, the Protestant cause had suffered a crushing defeat at the Battle of White Mountain. And yet, in 1621, a remarkably self-assured Protestant court church was being completed in Langenburg. The confidence expressed in the images speaks amidst the chaos of catastrophe. While outside, the political and religious order was increasingly disintegrating, inside the chapel, a world was being conceived in which everything was interconnected and history possessed a divine meaning. It is almost a built manifestation of the Protestant faith, created at the very beginning of the greatest confessional catastrophe in the history of the Holy Roman Empire.



Descendants of the Olnhausen "service nobility" living down-to-earth on the ground floor in a large family circle“

We stand today on their soil [the soil of our ancestors]. And we bear responsibility for the soil on which others will one day stand.” Gerd Ohlhauser, September 13, 2026