

Anglo-Saxon Christianity

- How did the Anglo-Saxons become Christians?
- What Christian buildings did they erect?
- Who lived in these buildings?
- What amazing things did they make?
- What is still around from Anglo-Saxon times?

If we want to find out about the Church in Anglo-Saxon times, we should ask this man, St Bede. He wrote a large and long history book all about it. It's called *History of the English Church and People*.



How did the Anglo-Saxons become Christians?

The Anglo-Saxons became Christians because some kind and clever priests came to teach them all about God, Jesus and the Church. Many of these kind and clever priests became saints.

St Augustine was sent from Rome to teach the Anglo-Saxons in the south of Britain. He became the first Archbishop of Canterbury.

St Aidan came from Ireland. He went to live on the island of Lindisfarne, which is off the north-east coast of England. He taught the Anglo-Saxons in the north of England.

St Cuthbert was an Anglo-Saxon who was one of Aidan's first pupils. He became a Christian teacher himself.





What Christian buildings did they erect?

Once the Anglo-Saxons became Christians, they built many churches. Some churches were big and were called 'minsters,' some were little, and they were all around the country.

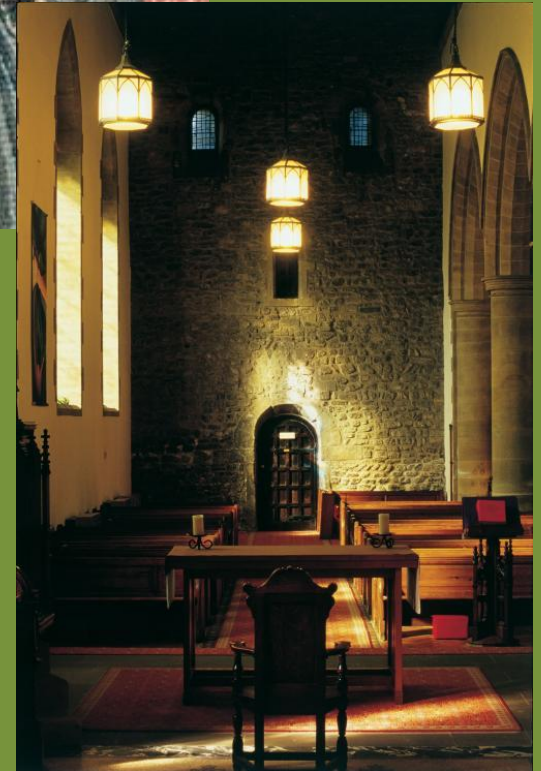
This map shows the different Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Why do you think the first churches were built in Northumbria and Kent?

The Anglo-Saxons also built monasteries and abbeys. Some famous Anglo-Saxon abbeys were at Whitby, Winchester, Ely near Cambridge and Wearmouth-Jarrow, near Newcastle.



Who lived in these buildings?

Monks like me and nuns lived in the monasteries and abbeys. These were Christian men and women who decided to live together in a community, instead of staying with their families or marrying and having children of their own. The women would live with other women, and the men would live with other men. The monks and nuns spent their lives in prayer, at work looking after their home and growing food, or doing good work for the families who lived around them. They taught children, ran hospitals, said Mass, and because they were the only people who were literate, they would do any reading or writing that anybody needed. They also made art.



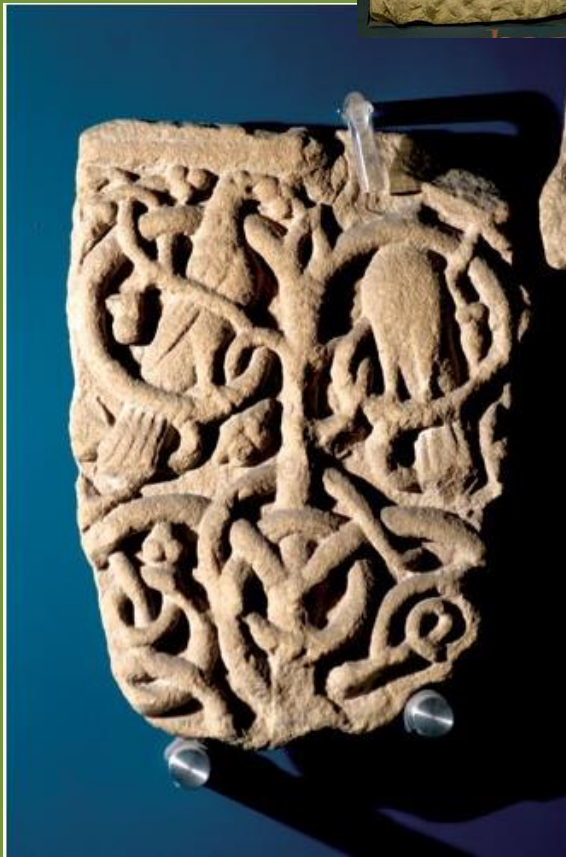


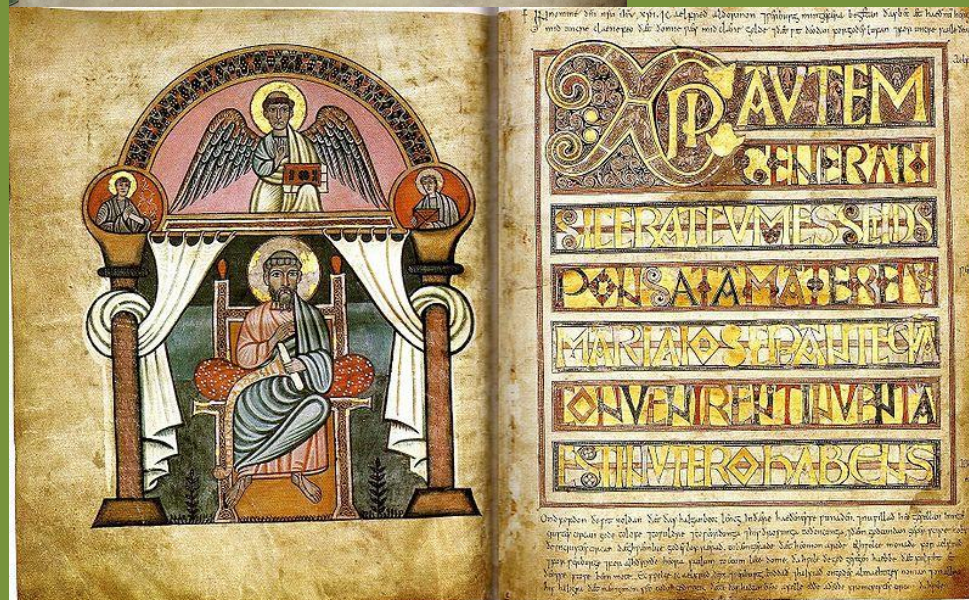
What amazing art did they make?

The Anglo-Saxon monks and nuns made art in stone, glass and parchment. Much of this artwork has been lost, but we can still see some of it today.

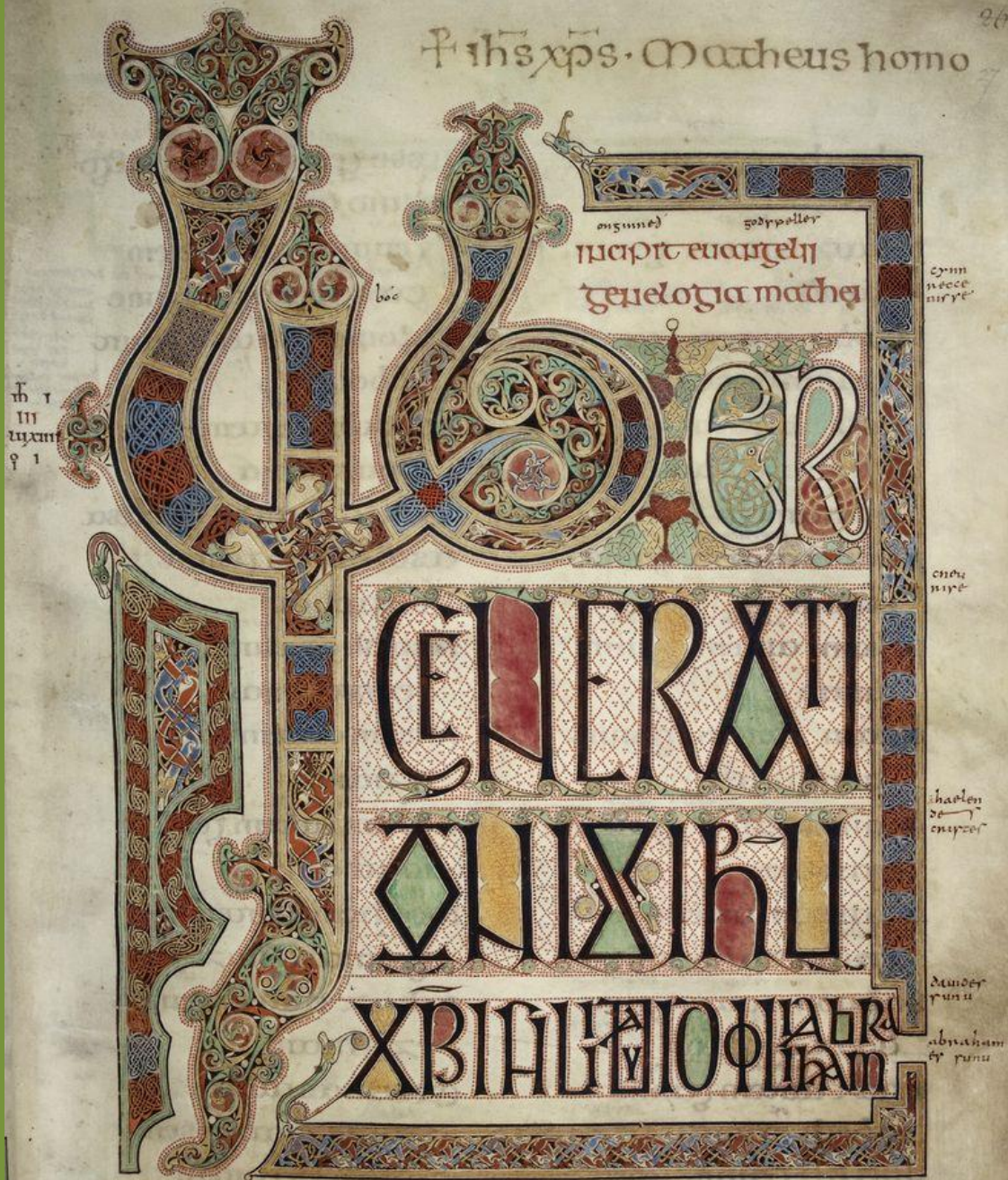
This stained glass window is made of real Anglo-Saxon glass. It is from the famous monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow.

Wearmouth-Jarrow had some of the first stone buildings in England. The stone was carved into animal and plant shapes and painted bright colours.





Anglo-Saxon monks were responsible for writing some important non-fiction books. I wrote my history book, but my brother monks also wrote about science, poetry, farming and how to live a good life. There were no printers, so all the books were copied by hand. Once the books had been copied, artist monks would decorate them with beautiful pictures. Would you like a closer look?



This begins
'Liber
Generationis.'
Can you see
how the L, I
and B have
been
decorated?
These are
called
illuminated
letters.

Manasses damascenus de eisdē sic ait. Et sup. unmadā exaltat mont in
armenia: quo baris appellatur. ubi requieuit archa. 7 Noe. 7 his hyrcippe eode opdm munit
sherande Jodes nāme.



What is still around from Anglo-Saxon times?

You can see many examples of Anglo-Saxon monastic art in museums, like the British Museum and the British Library. The libraries of cathedrals and universities often have beautiful manuscripts, and sometimes they allow you to see them.

The remains of Anglo-Saxon Christian buildings (for example, bits of wall or decorated carvings) can often be seen surrounded by later stonework in old churches and cathedrals.

You can see Anglo-Saxon buildings at Widdington church, Wendens Ambo church, and St Helen's Chapel, Wicken Bonhunt. St Helen's has a thatched roof, tiny windows and a dirt floor.





Now enjoy colouring your own illuminated letters!

