

HERE WE STAND

The Lives That Shaped the Reformation

Martin Luther

Why Study Church History?

Five Reasons to Study Church History:

1. Fight chronological snobbery
 2. Benefit from the wisdom of those who came before us
 3. Theology develops in a historical context
 4. Learn about your heritage
 5. Church history is interesting and encouraging
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Martin Luther (1483–1546)

The Beginnings

- Born 1483 in Eisleben, Germany (born Martin Luder)
 - Father Hans: copper miner turned semi-wealthy businessman
 - 1505: Thunderstorm vow to Saint Anne → leaves law school to become a monk
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Life as a Monk

- Joined Augustinian monastery — most strict
 - Extreme acts of penance; confessed for hours daily to Johann von Staupitz
 - Driven by late medieval theology (nominalism / via moderna): salvation by "doing your best"
 - Staupitz's counsel: stop looking at yourself — look to Christ
 - Romans 1:16–17 transforms Luther: the righteousness of God is received by faith, not earned
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Indulgences & The 95 Theses (1517)

- Indulgences: remission of time in purgatory; "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings..."
- Oct. 31, 1517: Luther nails 95 Theses to Wittenberg church door
- Key arguments in the Theses:

- Goal: reform the church, not break from it
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The Debate Years (1519–1520)

1519 — LEIPZIG DEBATE WITH JOHANN ECK

- Question: who has spiritual authority?
 - Eck accuses Luther of being a Hussite → Luther studies Huss, agrees on sola scriptura
 - Jan Huss (1372–1415): Scripture alone, not the papacy, is ultimate authority
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KEY DOCTRINE: SOLA SCRIPTURA

- Scripture = highest authority, but not the only authority
 - Sola Scriptura ≠ Solo Scriptura (making yourself the pope)
 - Pastors/elders have real authority — but accountable to Scripture
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1520 — THREE MAJOR TREATISES

- Address to the Christian Nobility → priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:9–10)

 - Babylonian Captivity of the Church → only 2 sacraments: baptism & the Lord's Supper

 - Freedom of the Christian → justification by faith alone (sola fide)
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Justification by Faith Alone

Imputed righteousness: the alien righteousness of Christ credited to the sinner by faith

"A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to everyone." — Luther

Discussion: Harmonizing Paul & James

Paul (Rom. 3) — justified by faith apart from works of the law

James (Jas. 2:14–26) — faith without works is dead

Luther called James "an epistle of straw" — do you agree? How do you reconcile?

The Diet of Worms (1521)

- Papacy demands Luther recant or face excommunication
- Luther sorts writings into three piles; refuses to recant the third without Scriptural proof
- "Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me, amen."

- Excommunicated — the official start of the Protestant schism
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Later Life & Legacy

THE PEASANTS' WAR (1524-25)

- Reformational ideas spark political revolt among poor German peasants
 - Luther initially sympathetic, then sides with princes to suppress the rebellion
 - Up to 100,000 peasants killed; Luther loses favor with working class
 - Principle: the church proclaims the gospel; the state maintains public order
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MARRIAGE TO KATHARINE VON BORA (1525)

- Former nun; pursued Luther
 - Challenged Catholic requirement of clerical celibacy
 - Six children; warm family life; "Table Talk" recorded by students
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AUGSBURG CONFESSION (1530)

- Philip Melanchthon presents systematic Lutheran belief to the Holy Roman Emperor
 - Formal separation of Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches
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FINAL YEARS & DEATH

- Health problems: kidney stones, vertigo, arthritis, depression
 - Anti-Jewish writings — later misused by Hitler and the Third Reich
 - Died 1546; final words: Psalm 31:5 — "Into thy hand I commit my spirit"
 - When asked if he would die steadfast: "Yes."
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Legacy

"Luther's true legacy is his spiritual insight into the gracious character of God in Jesus Christ, the God who loves us and sustains us unto death, and again unto life."

— Timothy George