

# History of the Reformation

## The Life of Martin Luther

- Early Life
  - Luther was born November 10, 1483 in Eisleben, Germany, in the county of Mansfeld.
  - He was baptized the next day, November 11, and named Martin (November 11 is St. Martin's day).
- Family
  - His father was Hans Luder, copper miner.
  - His mother was Margaret Lindemann Luder (called Hanna by her family).
    - Margaret's family is important in Luther's biography – she was not a peasant as has been assumed until recently.
    - The Lindemann family was from Eisenach, and was a prominent family in the area.
  - Hans Luder's success in the copper business is directly responsible for Martin's ability to obtain the education he received prior to his becoming an Augustinian monk.
- Youth and Education
  - There are not a lot of details about Luther's youth:
  - His parents were strict and hard working.
    - His mother once beat him for taking a nut.
    - At least 8 children, but only one brother and three sisters survived to adulthood.
  - 1497 Luther attended a school at Magdeburg
  - 1498 – he attended Latin school at Eisenach and lived with his mother's family.
  - 1501 – he matriculated at the University of Erfurt with studies in the arts faculty
  - 1505 he stood for examination for the Master of Arts degree and then began the study of the law, with the intention of becoming an attorney (his father's dream).
- On July 2, 1505, he was caught in a thunderstorm and almost struck by lightning.
  - He cried out to St. Anne to save him and declared that he would become a monk.
  - Luther survived the storm and 15 days later entered the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt.
- The Monastery Years
  - Luther's struggle in the early years was basically personal –
    - how could he be accepted before God?
  - He was born into the Roman Catholicism,
    - educated in that tradition,
    - lived under the rule of the pope
    - believed every teaching.
- It is almost impossible for us to understand life under Roman Catholicism.
- Roman Catholic Domination
  - The Pope and the emperor of the Roman Empire ruled – everything.
    - The Scriptures were subject to the Pope.
    - The Sacrament of Holy Orders was extremely important
    - The laity were considered too stupid to understand the Scriptures and were forbidden to have them.
- In Germany the local rulers had more autonomy than other countries because the Pope needed Germany's help in fighting the Turks.
  - The idea of national identity probably did not exist as we know it today, but it was beginning to dawn.
- Luther plunged into the workings of the monastery in an attempt to become right before God.
  - 1507 – ordained as a priest at the Cathedral Church of St. Mary in Erfurt.

- 1508 Luther was transferred to Wittenberg
  - 1508/09 – Bachelor’s/Master’s Degrees
  - Oct 1512 – Doctor’s degree in biblical theology.
  - Chair of Theology (for the rest of his life)
- 1511 – Trip to Rome
  - Incredibly disillusioned by the opulent lifestyles of Church officials
- 1515/16 he began his lectures on Paul’s Epistle to the Romans.
- Sep 1517, Luther held a disputation against Scholastic theology (basically Aristotelianism) and repudiated it.
- October 31, 1517 – he nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg.
  - Reaction to Tetzel’s selling of indulgences
- The Reformation Begins
  - There had been many reformation efforts before Luther, including the ones already discussed by Hus and Tyndale.
  - A German printer, without Luther’s knowledge, printed the 95 Theses and circulated them widely.
  - The Pope declared that a “wild boar” was loose in the vineyard of the Lord.
    - The Theses were taken, in Rome, as a direct attack on the authority of the Pope.
- Interaction with the Church
  - In October of 1518, Cardinal Cajetan petitioned Elector Frederick to extradite Luther to Rome or to banish. Frederick refused.
  - 1519-1521 – Luther began his second course on the Psalms
  - Luther and Carlstadt attended a disputation with Eck, the papal representative. Luther was outmatched by Eck’s debating ability.
  - June 15, 1520, the Pope issues a bull threatening Luther with excommunication.
  - October 23, Charles V is elected Roman Emperor.
  - December 10, 1520, Luther burned the bull outside the Wittenberg gates.
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- Diet of Worms
  - January 3, 1521, Pope Leo X excommunicates Luther.
  - March 6, 1521, Luther is summoned to the Diet at Worms where Luther is questioned before the emperor.
  - Luther refuses to recant and we are familiar with Luther’s reply.
    - “Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures or by evident reason- for I can believe neither pope nor councils alone, as it is clear that they have erred repeatedly and contradicted themselves-I consider myself convicted by the testimony of Holy Scripture, which is my basis; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. Thus I cannot and will not recant, because acting against one's conscience is neither safe nor sound. God help me. Amen.
  - What many do not know was Charles’ response to Luther refusal:
    - “I have decided to mobilize everything against Luther: my kingdoms and dominions, my friends, my body, my blood and my soul.”
- Kidnapping and Exile
  - Luther was “kidnapped” by Frederick’s men and taken to Wartburg Castle
  - Began work on the first translation of the New Testament into German.
  - Luther returned to Wittenberg in March of 1522, against the wishes of friends and Frederick.
  - In December he resumed his lectures.

- Luther the family man
  - Luther married a former nun, Katharina von Bora on June 13, 1525.
  - Their first son was born on June 7, 1526.
  - They had several children, a daughter, Elisabeth was born about a year later and died shortly after birth. There was a daughter, Magdalena, who died at about 13 years.
  - 1527 marks the year that Luther's health began to fail. He suffered from severe bouts of constipation, from kidney stones, from depression.
- Luther's work
  - Luther was constantly engaged in controversy either with Rome or with his brothers in the reformation movement.
  - From 1525 on, the eucharistic controversy raged.
  - There arose a peasants' revolt in 1525, to which Luther was expected to reply. Luther came down on the side of the rulers, costing him greatly among the "common" people.
  - He also engaged in the dispute with Erasmus on the Bondage of the Will, a work that Luther considered his best work.
  - 1529 – Marburg Colloquy,
    - Luther and Zwingli (and many others) met to attempt to work out their differences regarding the presence of Christ in the elements of the Eucharist.
  - 1530 – Luther's father died
  - 1531 – Luther's mother died
  - 1534 – The first addition of the entire Bible (Luther's translation) was published
  - 1539 – a revised edition was published
  - February 18, 1546 – Luther died in Eisleben
    - He was buried at Wittenberg on Feb. 22.
- Summary
  - from John Piper's short biography of Luther
  - Luther was a preacher, a family man, a citizen:
  - He preached 117 sermons in 1522; 137 in 1523; almost 200 in 1528, - from 1510 to 1546, Luther preached approximately 3,000 sermons
  - On Sunday afternoons after preaching twice, he led family devotions for an hour.
  - He was involved in every controversy that confronted the church, not only speaking, but writing and often leading the various meetings, etc.
  - He was constantly besieged by people from the town who wanted his advice on all sort of matters.
  - This does not include his work on the translation of the Bible that took many years
  - He was also a professor – that was his main occupation.
- Luther the man:
  - Luther was notoriously bad tempered; strong willed; given to strong language and strong opinions – from which he refused to budge.
  - Cf – RC Sproul's "The Insanity of Martin Luther" (Youtube)
- He lived under constant pressure after the Diet at Worms when he was thrust onto the world stage – a stage he never wanted nor sought.
- He stood for what he thought the Scriptures taught against friend and foe, regardless of the outcome. He would not understand, nor tolerate, our politically correct environment.
- He did not have the learning and academic skills found in others like Erasmus and Melancthon. What he lacked in skills, however, he made up for in work and in devotion to Scripture and to Christ.

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