

Defining Moments in Christian History

Martin Luther: Overview of his life

- Born in 1483 in Eisleben, Germany (nine years before Columbus discovered the new world); parents wanted him to be a lawyer
- In 1505 he entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt, after having received his B.A and M.A. from the University of Erfurt; thunderstorm experience and promise to St. Anne
- In 1507 he was ordained a priest; 1510 he visited Rome; important: “I would not have missed seeing Rome for a hundred thousand flourins; otherwise, I might have been afraid of being unfair to the pope.”
- 1512, received the Doctor of Theology degree; became lecturer at Wittenberg University
- 1513 – 1518 – lectured on Psalms, Romans, Galatians, Hebrews; very formative
- October 31, 1517 – posted 95 Theses
- 1519 – “conversion” experience; first understanding of justification by faith from Romans 1:17 “active” vs. “passive” righteousness
- 1520 –wrote three important treatises (*To the Christian Nobility*, *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *The Freedom of a Christian*); excommunicated by Pope Leo X title was “Exurge Domine” or “Arise O Lord”—the opening lines of the bull; Luther burned the papal letter
- 1521 – Diet of Worms; condemned by Charles V but “kidnapped” by Frederick the Wise (of Saxony) and taken to Wartburg Castle; translated the N.T. from Greek into German using Erasmus’ Greek NT; (in 6 months; 1500 words/day)
- 1524 – 1525 – peasants’ revolt (70,000 – 100,000 peasants killed)
- 1525 – married Katherine von Bora
- 1529 – Marburg Colloquy
- 1530 – Augsburg Confession
- 1534 – Published entire Bible in German
- 1545 – Died in Eisleben

Protest against Indulgences: *Ninety-Five Theses* (1517): a few samples

- 1) Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said “Repent,” willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance.
- 6) The pope cannot remit any guilt, except by declaring that it has been remitted by God and by assenting to God’s remission; though, to be sure, he may grant remission in cases reserved to his judgment. If his right to grant remission in such cases were despised, the guilt would remain entirely unforgiven.
- 27) They preach only human doctrines who say that so soon as the penny jingles into the money-box, the soul flies out of purgatory.
- 32) They will be condemned eternally, together with their teachers, who believe themselves sure of their salvation because they have letters of pardon.
- 36) Every truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without letters of pardon.
- 43) Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better work than buying pardons
- 53) They are enemies of Christ and of the pope, who bid the Word of God be altogether silent in some Churches, in order that pardons may be preached in others.
- 82) Why does not the pope empty purgatory, for the sake of holy love and of the dire need of the souls that are there, if he redeems an infinite number of souls for the sake of miserable money with which to build a Church? The former reasons would be most just; the latter is most trivial.
- 94) Christians are to be exhorted that they be diligent in following Christ, their Head, through penalties, deaths, and hell.