

Martin Luther Bible Study

- Session One

1) Meditation

- Psalm 46

2) Introduction

- Luther's mark on history
- Luther, the "angel of the eternal gospel" (Revelation 14)

3) Luther quizzes

- Biographical
- Theological

4) Luther's early life

a) Birth

- Date
- City
- Parents

b) Home

c) School

- Mansfeld
- Magdeburg
- Eisenach
- University of Erfurt (1501)

aa) Bachelor of Arts (1502)

bb) Master of Arts (1505)

5) Luther's vow

6) Luther becomes a monk (1505)

- The Augustinian Order
- The Black Cloister of Erfurt
- Ordination and first Mass (1507)

7) Luther returns to University of Erfurt (1507)

- Studies theology

- Vicar-general Staupitz assigns Luther to teach at University of Wittenberg (1508) and continue his studies
- Earns Bachelor of Arts in the Bible (1509)
- Returns to University of Erfurt; earns two more degrees (1510)

8) Luther goes to Rome (1510-1511)

9) Back to Wittenberg (1511)

- Meeting under the pear tree with Staupitz
- Staupitz's orders: preach, teach, and study
- Luther earns Doctor of Theology degree (1512)
- Luther's pulpits

aa) Monastery dining room

bb) Monastery chapel

cc) St. Mary's, town church of Wittenberg (Luther was parish priest)

dd) Castle Church at University of Wittenberg

- Wittenberg becomes Luther's permanent home (1511)

10) Luther's lifetime vocations

- Professor of the Bible (theology) at the University of Wittenberg
- Parish priest (pastor) at St. Mary's in Wittenberg

11) Martin Luther movie (part one)

Questions for discussion

- 1) In the Roman Empire of Central Europe during the 1400s and 1500s, to whom did the people pledge allegiance?
- 2) What did the Church emphasize?
- 3) How was Jesus presented to the people?
- 4) The early 16th century was a time of _____ and _____.
- 5) What did the Church demand from the people?
- 6) For what vocation did Luther study before he became a monk?
- 7) What were the three vows that Luther took when he joined the Augustinian Order?
- 8) What special responsibility nearly overwhelmed Luther at his ordination?
- 9) How did Luther view God?
- 10) What was significant about Luther's pilgrimage to Rome?
- 11) Whom did the Roman Catholic Church consider to be capable of properly interpreting the Bible?
- 12) In what language was the Bible written?
- 13) What two positions did Luther hold in Wittenberg from 1511 until his death in 1546?

Luther Quiz

- | | T | F | Biographical |
|------------|------------|------------|---|
| 1) | ___ | ___ | Martin Luther is in the bowling Hall of Fame. |
| 2) | ___ | ___ | Martin Luther was married to nobility. |
| 3) | ___ | ___ | Martin Luther operated a lathe. |
| 4) | ___ | ___ | Martin Luther was one of eight children. |
| 5) | ___ | ___ | Martin Luther had brown eyes. |
| 6) | ___ | ___ | Martin Luther had a farm (e-i, e-i, o) |
| 7) | ___ | ___ | Martin Luther wore glasses. |
| 8) | ___ | ___ | Martin Luther was an outlaw. |
| 9) | ___ | ___ | Martin Luther died while serving as a legal consultant. |
| 10) | ___ | ___ | More has been written about Luther than anyone in history. |

T F Theological

- 1) ___ ___ **Original sin is sin that we commit.**
- 2) ___ ___ **Every person born into this world has original sin.**
- 3) ___ ___ **Original sin means that I am lacking something at birth.**
- 4) ___ ___ **Even the good I do by nature is evil before God because of original sin.**
- 5) ___ ___ **The term 'original sin' is not found in the Bible.**

- 6) ___ ___ **God hates sin and will damn sinners.**
- 7) ___ ___ **God hates sin, but loves the sinner.**
- 8) ___ ___ **Baptism cleanses us of original sin, but not of actual sin.**
- 9) ___ ___ **Original sin clings to me until my death.**
- 10) ___ ___ **The law of God only accuses us.**
- 11) ___ ___ **The law of God always convicts us of sin.**
- 12) ___ ___ **The gospel only saves us.**
- 13) ___ ___ **Only the gospel saves us.**

Acknowledgment: Professor Emeritus Arnold J. Koelpin, Martin Luther College

Martin Luther Bible Study

– Session Two

- 1) Meditation
 - Psalm 6
 - 2) Why the Church was “ripe” for a reformation at Luther’s time
 - False teachings and corruption in the clergy
 - a) The Church emphasized God’s anger toward sinners, but largely ignored the doctrine of justification by faith through Jesus.
 - b) The teachings of the pope and the historical traditions of the Church were placed above the authority of the Bible.
 - c) Forgiveness was sold to the people through indulgences and through required acts of penance
 - d) The decisions and conduct of the pope and many within the clergy were influenced by immorality and greed.
 - The Renaissance in Europe
 - a) The renaissance brought a renewed interest in intellectual thought.
 - b) Printed literature was more available because of the printing press.
 - 3) How Luther’s experiences as a priest/monk led him to the truth
 - Luther’s spiritual troubles continued at the monastery
 - a) No matter how hard he tried, Luther was still troubled by his sins (see CW 377, v. 3-4)
 - b) Dr. Staupitz assigned Luther to study and teach theology.
 - By diligent study of The Word, Luther learned that salvation is a gift of God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ, not by any merit or good works (see Romans 3:20-28).
 - 4) Luther’s problems with the Church
 - Indulgences
 - a) Indulgences were often used to raise money. In 1517 the Church authorized the sale of indulgences by a Dominican priest, John Tetzel, to raise money for Albert, Archbishop of Mainz, who owed the pope for his position. The pope, Leo X, needed the money to build St. Peter’s Church in Rome.
 - b) Authorization for indulgences came from papal decrees:

Pope Sixtus IV in 1476: indulgences provide “immediate release to souls in purgatory”

Pope Leo X in 1513: indulgences bring “remission for sins and reconciliation with the Most High”
- Key names: John Tetzel
 Albert of Mainz
 Pope Leo X
 Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony
 Andreas Carlstadt
 John Eck
- c) Luther opposed indulgences on Biblical principles (I John 1:7, I John 2:2, II Corinthians 5:19). His message was welcomed by many.
 - d) Luther posted the 95 theses on October 31, 1517. This was an invitation to debate (see notes below for contents of the theses).
 - Elector Frederick becomes Luther’s protector

- a) Frederick opposed the Tetzels sale of indulgences in Saxony. Frederick wanted to sell his own indulgences in his province. He also needed money!
 - b) Frederick kept Luther in Germany when the pope wanted Luther to come to Rome.
 - c) When Luther and Carlstadt were invited to debate John Eck in Leipzig, Frederick guaranteed them "safe conduct." The debate happened in June-July, 1519. Luther firmly and effectively stated his position.
- Published writing by Luther led to a papal bull (decree) in 1520; Luther was given 60 days to repent.
 - Luther burned the bull (January 1520); he was excommunicated (January 1521).
- 5) The Martin Luther movie

Luther's 95 Theses

1) *Three main points of the 95 theses*

a) *Opposition to the object of expenditures on indulgences*

"The revenues of all Christendom are being sucked into the insatiable basilica. Before long all the churches, walls, palaces, and bridges of Rome will be built out of our German money. First of all, we should rear living temples, next local churches, and only last of all St. Peter's. Why doesn't the pope build the basilica of St. Peter out of his own money? He is richer than Croesus! He would do better to sell St. Peter's and give the money to the poor folk who are being fleeced by the hawkers of indulgences."

b) *Denial of the pope's power over purgatory*

"Papal indulgences do not remove guilt. Beware of those who say that indulgences effect reconciliation with God. He who is contrite has remission of guilt and penalty without indulgences. The merits of Christ are freely available without ... the pope. Therefore, I claim that the pope has no jurisdiction over purgatory. If the pope does have the power to release anyone, why in the name of love does he not abolish purgatory by letting everyone out? To say that souls are liberated from purgatory as soon as the coin in the coffer rings is to incite avarice!"

c) *The welfare of the sinner is endangered by indulgences*

"Indulgences are positively harmful because they impede salvation by diverting charity and inducing a false sense of security ... Indulgences induce complacency and thereby imperil salvation. Those persons are damned who think that letters of indulgence make them certain of salvation ... Peace comes from the Word of Christ through faith. He who does not have this is lost even though he is absolved a million times by the pope."

2) *Luther took no steps to spread his theses. He was merely inviting scholars to debate. But others surreptitiously translated the theses into German and gave them to the press. It didn't take long for Albert of Mainz to get them, and it didn't take much longer for Albert to ask Rome to intervene.*

Luther movies

Movies:

- "Martin Luther" (1951)
DVD available at www.amazon.com \$8
- "Luther" (2004)
DVD available at www.amazon.com \$10 (new) and \$5 (used)

Martin Luther Bible Study

- Session Three

1) Meditation

- Psalm 118, Luther's favorite psalm.
- *This psalm has been of special service to me. It has helped me out of many great troubles, when neither emperor nor kings nor wise men nor saints could help. We should view this verse (17) as a masterpiece ... It confronts the last terrible enemy, death, head on, and crushes it eternally in the power of the Gospel!* (Martin Luther).
- Trivia about Psalm 118:
 - a) Center chapter of the Bible (594 chapters before; 594 chapters after)
 - b) Psalm 117 is the shortest chapter in the Bible (two verses); Psalm 119 is the longest (176 verses)
 - c) Psalm 118:8 is the center verse of the Bible. Shouldn't the Bible's center verse have an important message? It says, "It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in men."
 - d) Luther had Psalm 118:17 written on the walls of his study: "Non moriar sed vivam et narrabo opera domini." (I will not die but live, and proclaim what the Lord has done.)

2) Luther's defenses of the 95 theses

- Pope Leo X ordered the head of the Augustinians, Gabriel della Volta, to contact Staupitz. He was to "silence Luther." At Heidelberg (April 1518) Luther appeared before the leaders of the Augustinians. The Augustinians listened to Luther and did not order him to stop teaching. Luther: "I went on foot. I came back in a wagon."
- Leo X ordered Cardinal Cajetan to bring Luther to Rome. To protect Luther, Elector Frederick convinced Cajetan to meet with Luther in Germany. Luther and Staupitz went to Augsburg (October 1518). Luther's instructions: "Revoco, nothing else!" Cajetan and Luther argued ... Cajetan walked out in anger. Luther wrote Leo X; expressed willingness to repent if shown his errors from Scripture. Staupitz released Luther from his vows. Luther's friends, fearing for his life, sent him back to Wittenberg at night.
- Luther debated John Eck at the University of Leipzig (July 1519); this was Wittenberg vs. Ingolstadt. Debates lasted two weeks
 - a) Other also represented Wittenberg; Carlstadt was first.
 - b) Eck placed the Bible in secondary position, the teachings of the church fathers first; Luther accepted the church fathers only where they agreed with Scripture.
 - c) The Leipzig debate strengthened Luther's convictions, especially his belief that the Bible is the only true guide in faith and doctrine.

3) Luther's writings clarify his teachings

- "The time for silence has passed" (Luther).
- *Address to the Christian Nobility (August 1520)* *Luther was calling the government leaders to action!*
 - a) The Roman Church has surrounded itself with three walls of false teaching:
 - 1) The pope and the clergy are above the government (Luther: All people, including the clergy, must obey the government, except when it orders them to break God's Law).
 - 2) Only the pope can explain the Bible correctly (Luther: Through careful study and led by the Holy Spirit, each Christian has the power to explain the Bible. This is the "universal priesthood of all believers.")
 - 3) Only the pope can summon a general church council (Luther: Any Christian, especially a government leader, has the duty to take action to deal with sin!)
 - 4) The address included bitter complaints about Rome's sins. "There is such a state of things that baffles description ... cheating, roaring, lying, deceiving, robbing, stealing, evil living, crime, and every sort of contempt of God." The *Address* concludes with 32 suggestions for reform and improvement.
 - b) Luther was calling government leaders to action. They needed to save the people and the Church from Rome's abuses of power. Rome's sins must be corrected.
- *The Babylonian Captivity (October 1520)*
 - a) Luther compared Rome to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who held God's people captive
 - b) Luther wrote that Rome held the Church captive with seven chains (the sacraments). In the RC Church, there were seven sacraments: Baptism, Lord's Supper, Confirmation, Ordination, Confession/Penance, Marriage, and Extreme Unction.

- c) Luther's definition of a sacrament: a means whereby God forgives sins using God's ~~Word and~~ an outward sign (an earthly element). He claimed only three of the seven (Baptism, Lord's Supper, and ~~penance~~ d this, and he was "unsure" about penance (no earthly element).
- d) When Luther rejected ordination as a sacrament, he denied the clergy's exclusive power to intercede for sinful man and grant forgiveness. Luther said all people are priests (later clarified in the Small Catechism – The Ministry of the Keys).
- e) Luther rejected the Church's teaching about the Lord's Supper that the elements are changed by the priest into the body and blood of Christ. Instead, he taught that the body and blood are present "in with and under" the bread and wine (real presence). The people should receive both bread and wine. Finally, there is no repeated "bloody sacrifice" during every Mass. Christ died once for all.
- *Treatise on Christian Freedom (November 1520)*
 - a) Luther wrote that because of faith, the believer is "a free lord, subject to no one."
 - b) At the same time, the Christian is subject to everyone. One redeemed and loved by God wants to return that love. He becomes "the most dutiful servant of all ... subject to everyone."

4) Luther breaks with the Church

- His writing led to a papal bull (decree) in 1520
 - a) *Exsurge Domini* – "Arise O Lord"
 - b) Pope Leo X: "Arise O Lord, and judge thy cause. A wild boar has invaded Thy vineyard."
 - c) The bull listed 41 reasons why Luther should be condemned as a heretic and excommunicated unless he recanted.
 - d) All Christians ordered to burn Luther's writings.
 - e) The bull gave Luther 60 days to recant.
- Luther burned the papal bull on December 10, 1520. Luther: "Rome ... because you have destroyed the truth of God, may the Lord consume you in these flames."
- Pope Leo X excommunicated Luther (January 1521); requested that Emperor Charles V declare Luther an outlaw
- Luther's supporters hoped that the coming diet (a conference between the emperor and the German princes) at Worms would give him a fair opportunity to defend his teachings.

5) Closing prayer

*Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word;
Curb those who by deceit or sword
Would seek to overthrow your Son
And to destroy what He has done.*

*Lord, Jesus Christ, your power make known,
For you are Lord of Lords alone;
Defend your Christendom that we
May sing your praise eternally.*

*O Comforter of priceless worth,
Send peace and unity on earth.
Support us in our final strife,
And lead us out of death to life.*

CW 203, by Martin Luther

Luther Resources

- 1) "Here I Stand – A Life of Luther" (Roland H. Bainton)
- 2) "Luther – Reformer" (James M. Kittleson)
- 3) "Martin Luther, Hero of Faith" (Frederick Nohl)
- 4) "Martin Luther, Man of God" (Morton A. Schroeder)
- 5) "Martin Luther, a Man Who Changed the World" (Paul L. Maier)