



Martin Luther

Protestant Reformer

"Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason, I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God."

Martin Luther was born in Germany on November 10, 1483. His father wanted him to pursue a career in law, and Luther entered the University of Erfurt, receiving his master's degree in 1505. In accordance with his father's wishes, Luther went to Law school and increasingly needed assurance about life, taking interest in theology and philosophy. His personal life in a crisis, he abandoned his law career and joined a monastery as a monk. By 1508, he was ordained for the priesthood and taught theology at the University of Wittenberg before earning his Doctor of Theology in 1512. In 1516, a papal commissioner was sent to Germany to sell indulgences (tickets to Heaven), and Luther criticized this. The issue centered around forgiveness of sins – was salvation by grace or by works? Luther argued that salvation by grace was the only approach to God that was supported by scripture. Luther published 95 theses in Germany and many other countries to counter positions held by the Catholic Church that he felt came against scripture. This seemingly simple issue struck at the core of the Catholic Church's power, and they demanded Luther recant. When Luther refused, citing the authority of the Word of God, he was excommunicated. Many in Germany, however, agreed with Luther and his reliance on scripture as the ultimate authority in spiritual matters. The Reformation spread like wildfire. Throughout his life, though he sometimes erred, Luther defended reliance on the Word of God.

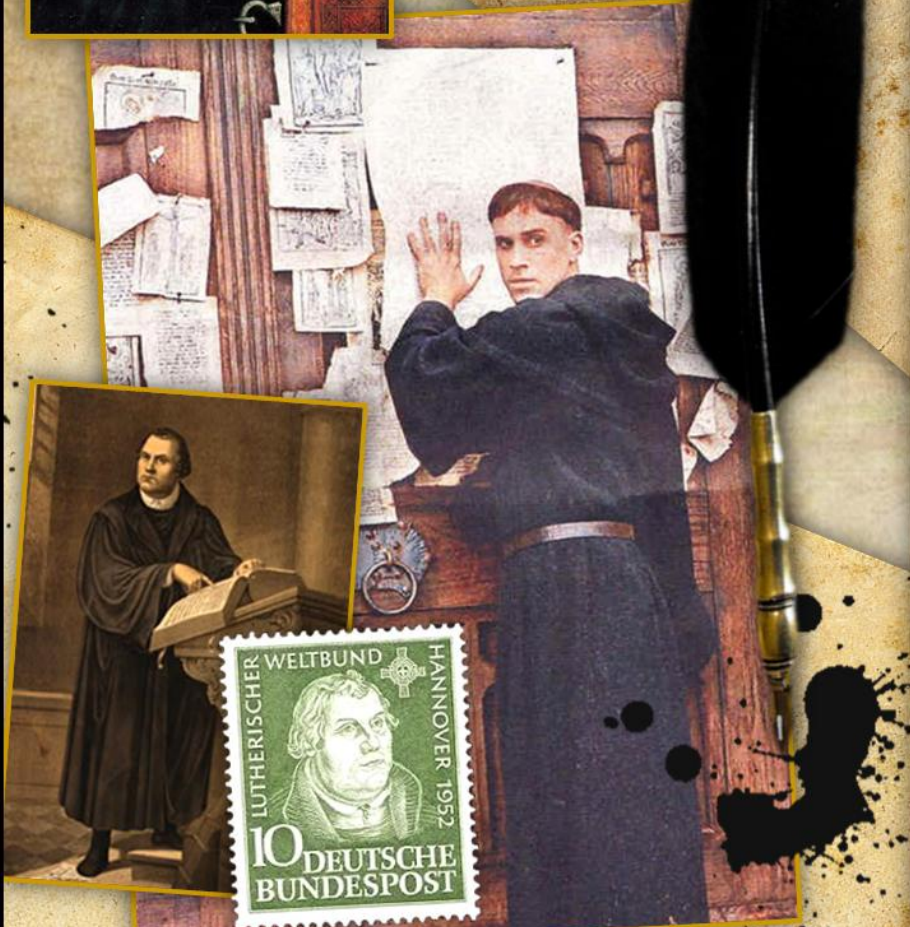




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