



# The Reformation

The Historical Context of the Reformation  
[2017 Perspective]

# The Big Two Questions in Life

1. Who is He? Which means: learning to Worship and remembering that we are Dependent Beings. [We do not have the power of being within ourselves.]
2. Who are We? Which means: learning to Repent and remembering that we are Not Independent Beings. [The Fall has affected us all but by overcoming the effects of the Fall we worship and live in wisdom by following the moral law.]

Note: Since we are created in the image of God, we cannot understand ourselves without understanding who God is [the *imago Dei*]. Our search for meaning begins with the two questions above. Socrates was only half right [“Know Thyself”].

Psalm 1 [Life patterns – compare to Christ's metaphor of **building on sand or stone foundation**.]

אֲשֶׁר־יֵשֵׁב  
וּבְדֶרֶךְ חַטָּאִים, לֹא עֹמֵד, וּבְמוֹשָׁב לְצִים, לֹא יֵשֵׁב  
אֲשֶׁר לֹא הֵלֵךְ, בְּעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים א

1 Satisfied is the man that does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the arrogant.

כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה, חִפְצוֹ; וּבְתוֹרַתוֹ יִהְיֶה, יוֹמָם וּלְיָלָה ב

2 But **his delight is in the law of Yahweh; and in His law he intently studies day and night.**

וְהָיָה-- כְּעֵץ, שֶׁ יִלְבֹּשׁ פִּלְגֵי-מַיִם ג  
אֲשֶׁר פִּרְיוֹ, יִתֵּן בְּעֵתוֹ--וְעַל יָדָיו לֹא יִלָּחַץ; וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה יִצְלִיחַ

3 And he will be like a tree planted by streams of water, that produces its fruit in its season, and whose  
leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he succeeds.

לֹא-כֵן הָרְשָׁעִים: כִּי אִם-כֶּמֶץ, אֲשֶׁר-תִּדְפֹּא רוּחַ ד

4 This is not true of the wicked; but they are like the chaff which the wind drives away.

עַל-כֵּן, לֹא-יִקַּח רְשָׁעִים--בְּמִשְׁפָּט; וְחַטָּאִים, בְּעֵדַת צְדִיקִים ה

5 Therefore the wicked will not be able to withstand judgment, nor can sinners join the assembly of the  
righteous.

כִּי- יִדְעַ יְהוָה, דֶּרֶךְ צְדִיקִים; וְדֶרֶךְ רְשָׁעִים תִּאבֵּד ו

6 For Yahweh watches over the way of the righteous; but **the way of the wicked is self-destructive**  
[Hebrew verbal imperfect tense].



The issues of life and death have been built into buildings for 1000's of years in the “egg and dart” pattern of architecture. This is from the ruins of ancient Rome near the Trevi Fountain.



# The Justice/Perfection/Righteousness of God

צַדִּיק

Tsadiq: righteous = to be straight not crooked!

[This idea is going to bring a ton of discussion in Reformation Europe.]

Proverbs 3.5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 4.25 Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you.

26 Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm.

27 Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.



The Law defines the straight way for us! Luther thinks about this from two perspectives.





Can you buy  
righteousness/straightness  
[acceptance with God]?

This is a collection box from  
the Luther museum in  
Wittenberg. It was used to  
collect money for the  
purchase of an indulgence.

“When the coin in the  
coffer rings,  
Your grandmother’s soul  
from purgatory springs!”  
[said in German]







# Why do we study?

## TO PREVENT THE “OH-NO”!

From *The Last Judgment*, Sistine Chapel, Rome

Eccl.12.13 “The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. <sup>14</sup> For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.”

Death comes early to most people of the Middle Ages. The afterlife is very near! The church held the keys.

“Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled; without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.” Nicene creed, long form.





# How did we get here?

- 2000 years of thinking – The Church is more than just 500 years old!
- 2000 years of the Holy Spirit's work in the minds of His people [the Holy Spirit was still completely active from AD 500-1500]
- Only by tracing our history back through the centuries, can we answer this question.
- Not easy to acquire the mindset of the people in Europe in 1500.
- We will look at key events and travel to some of the important cultural and geographic settings of this time.
- What lessons and insights are we to draw from this study?



# Wittenberg

Brücke 1  
Genehmigungs-Nr.  
7/91

Halt  
Aussteigende erst an  
Land gehen lassen  
zulässige Personenzahl  
112

Anlegegenehmigungen erteilt der Eigentümer







Wittenberg [berg or burg meaning fortress] was about 400 years old when Luther arrived in 1508.

Wittenberg was a medium sized town with about 2000 as a population. About the size of Woodbury.

The largest city in Europe at this time was about the size of Murfreesboro today.

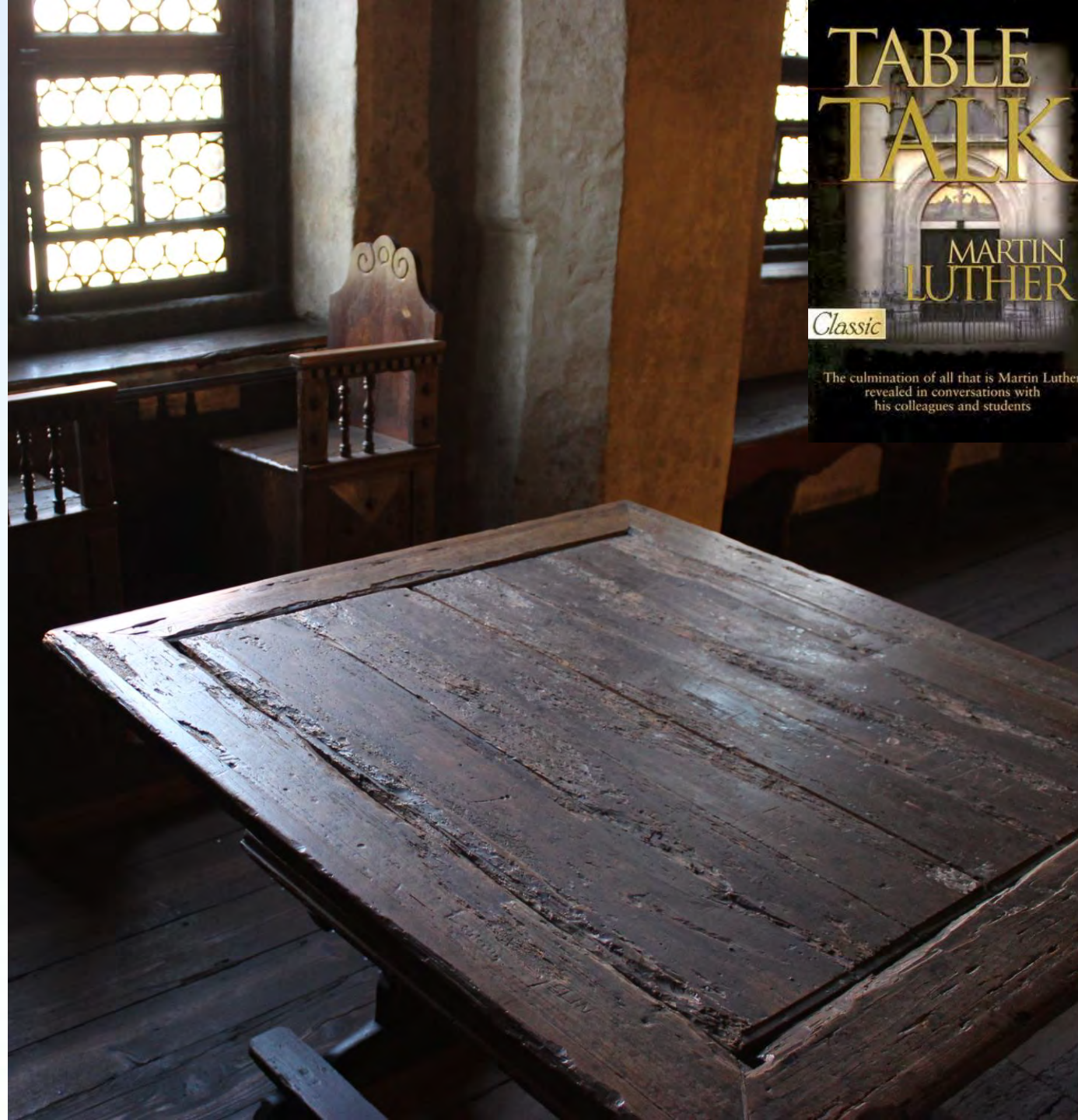




Hier lebte  
und wirkte  
Dr Martin Luther  
von 1508 bis 1546.











To really get in the spirit of the Reformation you can buy some Luther socks that read in German:

“Here I stand! I can do no other!”

[We will put that in context for you.]





Dr. M. Luther

Aus der Kunstsammlung des Kaiserlichen Museums in St. Petersburg.

Die Bibel,  
oder die ganze  
Heilige Schrift  
alten und neuen  
Testaments  
nach der  
deutschen Uebersetzung  
D. Martin Luther's.

Prachtausgabe  
mit Nonpareil-Schrift.

Mit 28 Stahlstichen und 1 Karte von Palästina.

Kadenpreis: 2 $\frac{2}{3}$  Thaler Sächf.

Gildburghausen, Amsterdam und Philadelphia:  
Druck und Verlag vom Bibliographischen Institut.  
1840.

Why did an obscure Augustinian monk from Saxony create such a sensational impact on the Church and culture of the late Middle Ages?





The Papacy is the Oz behind the curtain of power in late medieval Europe.

Martin Luther is Toto!

[see Donation of Constantine]



## The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

Matther 13.<sup>31</sup> He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. <sup>32</sup> Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet **when it grows**, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

<sup>33</sup> He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked **all through the dough**.”

The picture painted in the Parable of the Mustard Seed by Jesus is of the humble beginnings of the church experiencing an explosive rate of growth. It grows large and becomes a source of food, rest, and shelter, for both believers and false professing individuals that seek to consume or take advantage of its benefits while residing or mixing among what was produced by the seed (1 Corinthians 5:1; 6:7; 2 Corinthians 11:13; Galatians 1:7). In other words, Jesus predicts that, while the church will grow extremely large from just a small start, it will not remain pure. While this is not a condemnation of the "bigness" of modern Christianity, it does show us the greatest burden that comes with it. The Parable of the Mustard Seed is both a **prediction and a warning**.





There are a thousand and one implications of the mustard seed parable as it worked itself out in the last two thousand years.

Many of these meant changes that improved and enhanced and redeemed civilization and culture but some of the changes were more difficult.

[One little example: In the pagan world in Europe, dead bodies were burned or buried with a North – South orientation.

After Europe became Christianized, bodies were buried with an East – West orientation.]

The growth of Christianity was amazing in those early centuries but what about those birds?

For perspective: Christianity became a legal religion with the Edict of Milan by Constantine in 313. The Nicene creed came just after this in 325.






We will see that East is the direction of resurrection.

This is the Strasbourg Cathedral looking straight down the nave to the east. Every church built in the Middle Ages has this same perspective.

This is the tallest church built entirely during the medieval period at 46 stories.

Why invest in a space to worship that looks like this?





„Wo Christus ist,  
*Where Christ is,*

geht er allzeit wider den Strom.“  
*there he always goes against the flow.*”

Martin Luther 1517





Luther's pulpit from  
which he preached  
thousands of times  
in Wittenberg.

In many weeks he  
preached every  
day!



## World History as Palistrophe?

- A Abraham and the creation of Yahweh's people 2000BC
- B Moses and the freedom of Egyptian slavery 1500BC
- C David and the Conquest of Jerusalem 1000 BC
- D The Fall of Jerusalem [Zion] 500 BC
- E Christ the Son redeems his people 0
- D' The Fall of Rome AD 500
- C' The Crusades and the Conquest of Jerusalem  
[rediscovery of Plato/Aristotle] AD 1000
- B' Martin Luther and the freedom from Roman Catholic  
domination AD 1500
- A' To be determined? AD 2000





Raphael's School of Athens 1510-11



# The halves of western history – 1000 years of perspective

- AD 100 to 1100
- Idealism [“Plato baptized” – God as the ultimate reality]
- Dominated by Constantinople and Greek thought
- **Plato** and the world of Ideas, other-worldliness
- Theology
- AD 1100 to 2100
- Realism [“Aristotle baptized” – the physical world is all we see]
- Dominated by the Humanism that grew from the imbalance after the Renaissance
- **Aristotle** and this world, getting this world organized into categories
- Science



# Central Cities of the West

[Remember when the  
Spirit in Acts told Paul:  
“Don’t go east, go west.”

- **Rome 100 BC – AD 300**
- **Constantinople [New Rome] AD 300 – 1200**
- **Venice 1200 - 1400**
- **Florence 1400 – 1500 [Luther’s time]**
- **Lisbon 1500 - 1600**
- **Amsterdam 1600 -1700**
- **Paris 1700 - 1800**
- **London 1800 - 1900**
- **Berlin 1900 - 1950**
- **New York 1950 -**

# The Crusades and the Big Change



- “How are you going to keep them down on the farm once they’ve seen Paris?” [WW2 – but the same point]
- Exposure the outside world brought new thinking and recovery of the classical period. This led directly to the Renaissance and new restaurants.
- How are you going to get a wealthy landowner running his complicated life to drop everything and travel 1000’s of miles to risk his life for Christ? = indulgences. AD 1095
- What is a **plenary indulgence**? Full escape. “Get out of jail free” card.



# *Yersinia pestis* bacterium – bad news for Europe

[After the big one, the plague returns many times. One while Luther was in school.]

- The population of Europe was cut in half in 1347-49
- Whole towns were wiped out
- The individual laborer found himself with new power
- This radically overturned the balance of power and traditional roles of peasants and nobles.







Why does our local church building not look like this one? What causes a people to build these massive churches? Where does this fit in the mustard seed parable? Is this building one of the birds?





Is this the door to heaven in 1500?





It is a **mistake** to think that the Church was at a low point at the beginning of the Reformation. This was taught for many years but is not an accurate viewpoint!

## THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

*Thomas A. Kempis*



- There are examples of corruption in the Church in every one of the last 2000 years. It is true that the papacy was in poor condition.
- The claim that the clergy was uneducated is generally true for 1000 years from the close of the western Roman period in AD 500. There was resentment of the laity against the clergy because of their untaxed, special legal status in society. Society depended on the literate clergy.
- There was massive church building in the century before the Reformation began. Thousands of churches were being constructed during the late medieval period.
- There was a rise in literacy and piety among the common people. The two books that sold out constantly in the 50 years before Luther were the Latin *Book of Hours* which was a prayer book for daily use, and Thomas a' Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*.
- The rising calls for reform of the church come not from apathy but from a desire to see the Church more morally consistent in meeting the needs of the common people. The Church was central in the lives of most people.



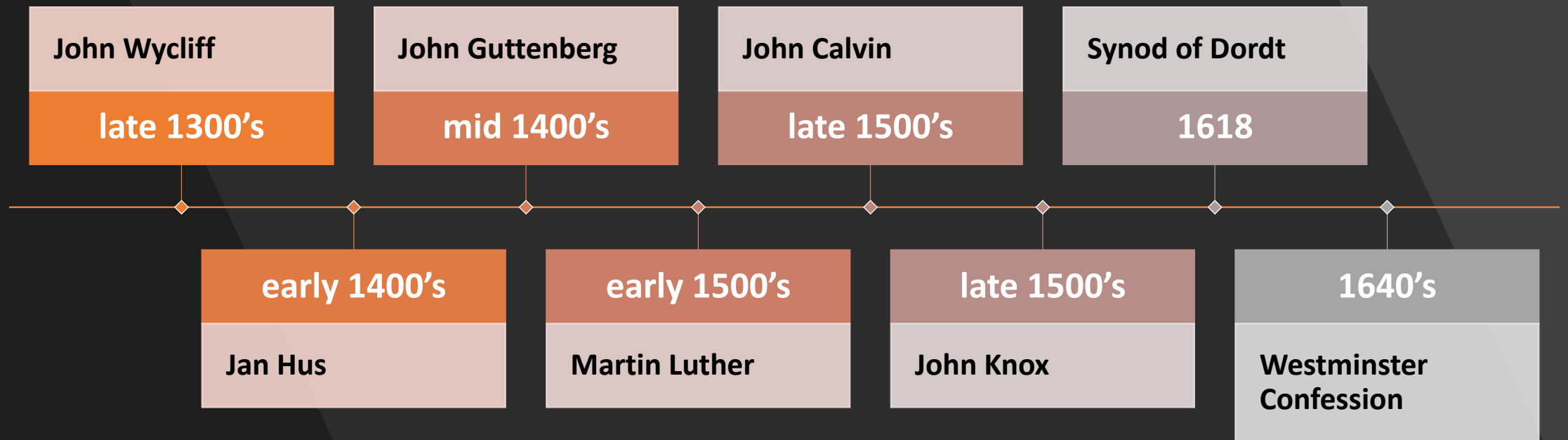
# “Where’s my Bible?”



- This is something that from Moses to Martin Luther, no Jew or Christian ever said. **No one owned a Bible** because they were not available or were far too expensive.
- Who is responsible for misinterpretation, if the book/text was never in front of you and if you could not read?
- Getting into the mindset of the middle ages begins with the limitations of those centuries.
- For 75% of the history of the Church only a few scholars, monks, priests had access to the Word.
- Why resist the translation of the Bible? Because heresy/heretics had been a problem from the beginning of the Church! The NT has dozens of warnings against heresy and those who misinterpret the faith. [Eg. Jude]



# A brief timeline:











Hus “the  
Goose” -  
Read the  
writings of  
Wycliffe and  
believed the  
church needed  
changes.

The laity  
should have  
access to the  
cup!

Bohemia  
became the  
first successful  
reformed  
church 100 yrs  
before Luther.  
War-wagons!



# The right man at the right time!

- If Luther had lived in Italy or Spain or Bavaria, or if he had lived **100 years** earlier, he would have died by execution as a heretic like Jan Hus in Prague.
- There was **political protection** because German's were tired of sending money to the Vatican/Italy.
- Frederick of Saxony was in a long line of German princes who **resisted Rome's** authority in civil matters.
- The culture was in the early stage of **national awareness** even though "Germany" was made up of 3000 little pieces. [Germany was not formed until 1871 under Otto von Bismarck].
- The interest in **local language** was on the rise. Latin was fading as a communication for scholars. E.g.. The Zurich debates were held using German so the 600 locals who attended could follow the arguments. Luther knew at least four languages.
- The **printing press** dispersed thoughts at lightning speed compared to the previous millenniums. Luther was the first "best selling author" of Europe.
- Luther had the fiery **personality** to carry off the focused decisions that had to be chosen to change the Church's direction. He was also a brilliant, multilingual scholar.