Lesson 4

Martin Luther

1st Slide – 1483-1546 -

Not the first reformer, but certainly the most prominent – potentially for his writings. If anyone could be said to have born for such a time as this, Luther fits the criteria, for certain.

When Martin was born in Germany, reformer, John Wycliffe of England had been dead for 99 years. It had been 68 years since Bohemian Reformer, Jan Hus was burned at the stake. At the age of 15, Dominican Monk, Girolamo Savonarola, and two of his fellow monks were burned at the stake in Florence, Italy for espousing reformatory ideas.

29 years before he was born the Guttenburg press was in production, printing the first Bibles ever to be mass produced. And, 29 years after he was born, Michaelango completed the paint of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

He was born at a prime time in world history for change to take place in the thinking and actions of the people of Europe.

2nd Slide – Eisleben was the home of Luther’s birth. HIs parents, Hans and Margaretha Luder moved to Mansfeld a year later, where Hans worked in a copper mine. Later, he owned the mine, and was able to provide some of the finer things of life for his family.

3rd Slide - From 1492 to 1505 Luther attended the University of Erfurt, Germany where he devoted his studies to the subject of law. Acquired BA & MA. Intending to become a lawyer.

1. However, On July 2, 1505, at age 21, during a thunderstorm, Luther cried: “Help me St. Anne, vows to St. Anne, I will become a monk!”
2. Within a month, enters the Order of Augustinian Monks.

4th Slide - Tormented by his sensitivity to his sinful nature, he ventured into the realm of extreme asceticism: prayer, fasts, sleep deprivation, cold, whipping himself; He was constantly in confession.

1. Luther: “*If ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery, I was that monk!*”
2. To him being a monk was a vow to depravation.

5th Slide – Within 2 years, May 2, 1507 – Luther was ordained a priest

In 1509, he earned a Bachelor of the Bible and in 1512 he reached   
the terminal degree: Doctor of theology.

Between 1513 and 1517, Luther lectured at University of Wittenburg on the  
Psalms, Romans, Galatians

6th Slide - 1515, great discovery: Rom. 1:17 During this time he discovered “the just shall live by faith”

1. Rom. 1:17 “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” In the column of his Bible he inscribed beside the word “faith” the word “Sola.” Meaning “alone” or “faith alone”
2. He came to believe that the Gospel is the revelation of the justice of God
3. To Luther, the justice of God was unbearable; yet, the Gospel was linked to God’s justice.
4. So, he saw that justice does not refer to punishment of sinners, but, righteousness is given to those who live by faith.
5. Justification is the free gift of God to sinners: righteousness is given, or imputed upon, by God who justifies humans by their faith in Jesus Christ.

7th Slide – “Here I felt as if I were entirely born again and had entered paradise itself through gates that had been flung open. The whole of Scripture gained a new meaning. And from that   
point on the phrase the ‘justice of God’ no longer filled me with hatred, but rather became unspeakably sweet by virtue of a great love.” –Martin Luther

8th Slide - Martin Luther’s Trip to Rome

1. 1511 – Augustinian Abbot Staupitz sent Luther on a pilgrimage to Rome.
2. He visited the holiest places; crawled up Pilate’s staircase. Struggling with the idea all the way up, he determined to walk slowly back down the stairwell.
3. Luther observed priests & bishops acting immorally & abusing their power
4. Luther: “*I went with onions & returned with garlic*”

9th Slide – During this time, Albert of Brandenburg bought electorship and archbishopric of Mainz. He hired a Dominican Monk, John Tetzel of Mainz to sell indulgences (a remission of punishment for sins, and release from pergatory).

1. The sale of indulgences was part of a fund-raising campaign commissioned by Pope Leo X to finance the renovation of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.
2. Tetzel was noted as saying: “As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs.”
3. Another quote - “Time for lust, time for lie, time to kiss your life goodbye. Send me money, send me green, heaven you will meet. Make a contribution, and you’ll get a better seat.”
4. Story of Tetzel’s vanity – The sale of an indulgence for sin yet to be committed. He was told the payment would be double. Later he was robbed while making his way to another appointment. The bandit showed his indulgence.

10th Slide – On October 31, 1517, Luther posted 95 Theses (Disputes) on the door of All Saints’ Church in Wittenburg protesting clerical abuses and the sale of indulgences.

1. This has been called the birth date of the Protestant Reformation
2. American Church Historian, Kenneth Latourette, in A History of Christianity, Vol. 2, Kenneth Latourette, pages 709 & 710, wrote,   
   “In crisp, vigorous language Luther challenged the indulgences. He protested against despoiling Germans to pay for the construction of St. Peter’s, saying that few Germans could worship there, that the Pope was rich enough to do the building with his own money, and that he would do better to appoint one good pastor to a church than to give indulgences to them all. Luther said that indulgences did not remove guilt and that the Pope could remit only those penalties which he himself had imposed on earth and that he had no jurisdiction over purgatory. He denied that the saints had accumulated surplus credits. He held that indulgences bred a false sense of security and so were positively harmful. To Luther’s surprise, the ninety-five theses created an immense sensation. Within a few months they were printed in the Latin original and in a vernacular translation and were being read across Germany. That they had this effect was due in part to the skill and forthrightness with which Luther drafted them. It was even more because of an underlying restlessness which hailed them as saying what many were happy to have said. As a result, Luther was drawn into controversy. Although at the outset he had no thought of breaking with the Pope or the Church of Rome, he was not one to draw back, and prudence and guarded speech were alien to his nature. In the course of the debate he was led on step by step until he had declared that both Popes and general councils of the Church could err, that only the Scriptures are authoritative, and that he would concede that he was in error only if convinced that what he held was contrary to the Bible and to sound reason. In effect he was insisting upon the right and the duty of individual judgement which must not be surrendered, even to the Catholic Church.”

11th Slide – Selections from 95 Theses

32. Those who suppose that on account of their letters of indulgence they are sure of salvation will be eternally damned along with their teachers.

36. Every Christian who truly repents has plenary (full) forgiveness both of punishment and guilt bestowed upon him, even without letters of indulgence.

37. Every true Christian, whether living or dead, has a share in all the benefits of Christ and the Church, for God has granted him these, even without letters of indulgence.

12th Slide – Selections from 95 Theses

81. This shameless preaching of pardons makes it hard even for learned men to defend the pope’s honor against calumny (slander) or to answer the indubitably shrewd questions of the laity.

82. For example: “Why does not the pope empty purgatory for the sake of holy love . . . For after all, he does release countless souls for the sake of sordid money contributed for the building of a cathedral? . . .”

13th Slide – 4 Attempts To Silence Luther

1. 4.25.1518 – Heidelburg Disputation
   1. Luther was put on trial before Augustinian General Council
   2. Introduced “Theology of the Cross”:
      1. Centrality of Cross
      2. Only Jesus can forgive sins
      3. We must be willing to become nothing for God’s glory
   3. He attacked scholastic theology, which he called “Theology of Glory” – those who hate the cross & love works in order to obtain earthly glory
   4. Martin Bucer, reformer of Strasbourg, attended & was persuaded
   5. Johann Eck, lawyer and firm defender of the Catholic cause, was in attendance – led to Leipzig Debate
2. Leo X offered Luther a Cardinalship – **He said, “How dare they try to buy me off!”**
3. 1518 - Cardinal Thomas Cajetan, Dominican papal legate, was sent to stifle Luther
   1. Luther presented written arguments
      1. -Pope was not infallible
      2. -Authority of council was superior to pope
      3. -Sacraments apart from faith cannot save
      4. -Justification by faith was scriptural
      5. -Appealed to Bible as supreme authority
   2. Cardinal Cajetan published order for Luther’s arrest
4. 07.1519 – Leipzig Debate with John Eck
   1. John Eck was actually Johann Maier of Eck vs. Luther
   2. Luther bested Eck through citation of Scripture by memory to prove that Christ, not pope, is head of church
   3. Eck accused Luther of being “Saxon Huss” (after Bohemian reformer John Huss (1369-1415)
   4. At first, Luther denied charge; during intermission, he researched Huss; came back to say: “We are all Hussites if we believe the Bible to be true”
   5. Luther’s affirmation of Huss, convicted heretic, was a dangerous admission

14th Slide – Why was Luther not killed in order to silence him?

He was protected by Frederick the Wise, (Frederick III, Saxony) who was able to manipulate pope & emperor

15th Slide – In 1518 and 1519, Luther defended his theology and debated Professor John Eck at Leipzig where he denied the supreme authority of popes and councils.

1. In 1520, the Pope issues a bull of excommunication at Luther, giving him 60 days to recant.

The papal bull begins as follows, “Arise, O Lord, and judge thy cause! Remember the reproach which the foolish cast against Thee all day long! St. Peter, St. Paul, the congregation of saint, and the church are called upon to arise. The foxes would lay waste the vineyard of the Lord; a wild boar has entered therein; a savage beast would pasture there.” Then forty-one of Luther’s theses are considered and condemned as heretical. He himself is called upon to recant within sixty days. If he and his followers refuse, they will be treated as heretics. His writings are to be burned, so that his remembrance shall be totally blotted out of the congregation of Christian believers. All intercourse with him and his adherents is forbidden. Every one is commanded to seize Martin Luther and deliver him to the Pope in Rome. There he shall be dealt with according to law.” The Life of Martin Luther, by Dr. William Rein, Seminary Director at Eisenach in Germany, c.1883, page 76

1. Luther responds with three significant writings defining his beliefs.

16th Slide – Burning of the Papal Bull – on December 15, 1520 – Saying, “Since they burn my books, I burn theirs.” It should be added here that by this point in time the pamphlets and tracts of Martin Luther’s thoughts, sermons & teachings were being reproduced on Gutenberg’s presses and distributed throughout Germany and all of Europe.

17th Slide – 1521 – Diet of Worms - Luther is excommunicated & condemned as a heretic and outlaw.

18th Slide – Fredrick the Wise rescued Luther and protected him at Wartburg castle, where Luther began to translate the New Testament into German.

19th Slide – Between 1523 and 1529, Luther continued his writings, including *Bondage of the Will*, *Large Catechism* and *Small Catechism* and the hymn, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*.

20th Slide – In 1523, Luther helped eleven nuns escape a cloister by hiding them in empty herring barrels.

In 1525 he marries one of these nuns, Katherine von Bora. They would have six children together.

21st Slide – In 1534, Luther published the entire Bible in German.

22nd Slide –

1. He continued writing, teaching and lecturing until he died on February 18, 1546.
2. Said, “When I die, I’m going to come back as a ghost & haunt the popes & his bishops. They’ll have far more trouble with the dead Luther than they ever had with the live one.”

23rd Slide – Martin Luther’s Successor

1. Philip Melanchthon was named successor
2. Real name: Schwarzerd, “Black Earth”, Greek: *melan chthon*
3. Attended Marbourg Colloquy; co-authored Augsburg Confession

24th Slide – Martin Luther’s Legacy

1. Salvation: justification by grace through faith
2. Lord’s Supper: consubstantiation – Christ’s presence with the elements
3. Priesthood of the believer
4. Union of church & state – to retain support of German princes
5. “Father Of The Reformation”

25th Slide - Martin Luther’s Legacy

Principles of Reformation

*Sola Scriptura*

*Sola Fide*

*Sola Gratia*

*Sola Christus*