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## The Reformation: *After Darkness, Light!*

Lesson 1

Five hundred and four years ago on **October 31, 1517**, a spark was lit by God's gracious providence that would shine the light of the gospel into the spiritual darkness of the Middle Ages. This light still shines today in the present darkness of our own age.

*Matthew 4:12-16; Luke 1:78-79*

**Latin:** *Post tenebras lux!*    **Hashtag:** *"After Darkness, Light!"*

### Why Remember the Reformation?

## 1. God Uses ORDINARY People to Do Extraordinary Things.

### *What Happened 504 Years Ago?*

God used an insignificant monk with a mallet to spark a REVOLUTION.

- ◆ On **Wednesday October 31, 1517** a monk by the name of **Martin Luther** approached the church in the university town of Wittenberg, Germany to nail his **95 Theses** to the church doors. These 95 "**points of debate**" were focused on a certain practice of what we now know as Roman Catholic Church (RCC), **which in Luther's day was the ruling church that exercised control over the spiritual lives of nearly all the people in Europe.**

- ◆ With each hammer blow, Martin Luther unknowingly unleashed a revolution that...

1. Resulted in ECONOMIC revolution.
2. Resulted in POLITICAL revolution.
3. Resulted in EDUCATIONAL revolution.
4. Resulted in CULTURAL revolution.
5. Resulted in a SPIRITUAL revolution – *a reformation that we still benefit from today!*

*"The Reformation of the sixteenth century is, next to the introduction of Christianity, the greatest event in history. It marks the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of modern times. Starting from religion, it gave, directly or indirectly, a mighty impulse to every forward movement, and made Protestantism the chief propelling force in the history of modern civilization." – Church Historian Philip Schaff*

### Defining Our Terms

- ◆ **"To reform"** – To cause a change for the better.

*To Reform calls for ongoing REPENTANCE by God's people.*

- ◆ **"The Reformation"** – A turning point in church history.

*The Reformation is a "BACK TO THE BIBLE" movement of God.*

*"The age of the Reformation bears a strong resemblance to the first century. Both are rich beyond any other period in great and good men [and women], important facts, and permanent results. Both contain the ripe fruits of preceding, and the fruitful germs of succeeding ages. They are turning points in the history of mankind. They are felt in their effects to this day, and will be felt to the end of time...In both centuries we hear the creative voice of the Almighty calling light out of darkness." – Church Historian Philip Schaff*

### A Movement of God that Led to...

Open BIBLES in the 1600s → Open HEARTS in the 1700s → Open DOORS in the 1800s

### The Most Powerful Force in All of History

*Is a Common MAN with a Common BIBLE Committed to an Uncommon PURPOSE!*

- ◆ **“Reformation Theology”** – Summarized in the **Five “Solos”** (Latin for “Alone”).

1. Bible-**BASED**: **Sola Scriptura** • Scripture Alone
2. Christ-**CENTERED**: **Solus Christus** • In Christ Alone
3. Gospel-**PROCLAIMING**: **Sola Fide** • Through Faith Alone
4. Life-**CHANGING**: **Sola Gratia** • By Grace Alone
5. God-**GLORIFYING**: **Soli Deo Gloria** • For God’s Glory Alone



**The Five Solas Are the Essentials of the True Gospel of Jesus Christ and Saving Faith.**

*According to the authority of Scripture alone we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone for the glory of God alone!*

*“A move to place God as He has revealed Himself in Christ at the center of the church’s life and thought.” – Carl Trueman*

- ◆ **“Reforming”** – The rediscovery of biblical revelation that leads to repentance, realignment, and restoration of sound doctrine and sound living.

*God is always at work “reforming” His church according to His Word by His Spirit for His glory and our good!*

## 2. We Still ENJOY the Spiritual Benefits of the Reformation.

- |     |    |  |
|-----|----|--|
| Yes | No | Do you enjoy congregational singing?   |
| Yes | No | Are you glad you own your own copy of the Bible?   |
| Yes | No | Do you like reading the Bible in your heart language?  |
| Yes | No | Do you enjoy taking the Lord’s Supper on a regular basis?  |
| Yes | No | Do you like being 100% sure of your salvation before you die?  |
| Yes | No | Do you like being able to confess your sins directly to God without going through a priest and doing penance?          |
| Yes | No | Are you glad for a worship service conducted completely in your own language?  |
| Yes | No | Are you thankful for a worship service centered on the preaching of God’s Word rather than the dead rituals of men?    |
| Yes | No | Are you thankful that your pastors can marry and still be in good standing with God?                                   |
| Yes | No | Are you thankful for the separation of Church and State?   |
| Yes | No | Are you thankful for believer’s baptism and being baptized on the right side of salvation?                             |
| Yes | No | Are you glad every believer is declared a “saint” by God in Christ Jesus!  |
| Yes | No | Are you glad every believer can enter God’s presence and come boldly to the throne of grace in prayer?                 |
| Yes | No | Are you glad every believer can worship in God’s presence anywhere and anytime without a priest or religious mediator? |

*If you answered “YES!” to these questions, then you have been directly impacted by the Reformation and we should give God all the glory as we thank Him for the men and women who **504 years ago and following** took part in the Reformation that is still taking place today!*

## 3. God Gets All the GLORY for What Takes Place in “His Story.”

- ◆ None of the Reformers would want us to glorify them more than God much less **IDOLIZE** them.

*“I simply taught, preached, and wrote God’s Word; otherwise I did nothing. And then, while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my [co-laborers], the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that never a prince or emperor did such damage to it. I did nothing. The Word did it all.” – Martin Luther*

*“[Luther] was a big man and he made big mistakes, along with all his fellow Reformers. Let us not idolize these people but learn from them, for they were simply doing in their age and generation what we seek to do in ours.” – Carl Trueman*

- ◆ The five Solas were the **FUEL** for the Reformation fire that burned so bright in the darkness.
- ◆ Only God can answer the two most important **QUESTIONS** anyone could ask in any age:

***What must I do to be saved from God’s wrath and enjoy a right relationship with Him?***  
***Who has the ultimate authority to answer that question?***

## 4. People Still SIT in Darkness Needing the Light of the Gospel.

- ◆ The answers to these two questions will determine your **DESTINY** for all eternity.

- ◆ Martin was a **GOOD** monk but being “good” is never good enough to earn your salvation.

*“If ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery, it was I.” – Martin Luther  
Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 1:16-17*

- ◆ Luther chose October 31st to hammer his 95 “talking points” to the church door, because October 31st was “ALL SAINTS EVE” or “HALLOWS EVE” – what we now know as “**HALLOWEEN**”!

### **Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences** (Commonly Known as the 95 Theses)

Out of love and concern for the truth, and with the object of eliciting it, the following heads will be the subject of a public discussion at Wittenberg under the presidency of the reverend father, Martin Luther, Augustinian, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, and duly appointed Lecturer on these subjects in that place. He requests that whoever cannot be present personally to debate the matter orally will do so in absence in writing.

- Thesis #1** When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said “Repent”, He called for the entire life of believers to be one of penitence.
- Thesis #2** The word cannot be properly understood as referring to the sacrament of penance, i.e. confession and satisfaction, as administered by the clergy.
- Thesis #62** The true treasure of the church is the Holy gospel of the glory and the grace of God.
- Thesis #82** They ask, e.g.: Why does not the pope liberate everyone from purgatory for the sake of love (a most holy thing) and because of the supreme necessity of their souls? This would be morally the best of all reasons. Meanwhile he redeems innumerable souls for money, a most perishable thing, with which to build St. Peter’s church, a very minor purpose.
- Thesis #86** Again: since the pope’s income today is larger than that of the wealthiest of wealthy men, why does he not build this one church of St. Peter with his own money, rather than with the money of [penniless] believers?
- Thesis #88** Again: Surely a greater good could be done to the church if the pope were to bestow these remissions and dispensations, not once, as now, but a hundred times a day, for the benefit of any believer whatever.
- Thesis #90** These questions are serious matters of conscience to the laity. To suppress them by force alone, and not to refute them by giving reasons, is to expose the church and the pope to the ridicule of their enemies, and to make Christian people unhappy.
- Thesis #91** If therefore, indulgences were preached in accordance with the spirit and mind of the pope, all these difficulties would be easily overcome, and indeed, cease to exist.

- ◆ What Luther nailed to the church door was quickly **translated** into common German and **distributed** using the new invention of the printing press.

### **The Halloween that Changed the World**

*The Reformation is worth remembering because God used it to bring light to the darkness for His glory and the good of all people!  
And that is something worth remembering and celebrating every day, not just once a year.*

*“Because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,  
to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” Luke 1:78-79*