

Martin Luther (der 10. November 1483—der 2. Februar 1546)

Luther and Protestant Reformation

Martin Luther's daring revolution: The reformation 500 years on

On the eve of the 500th anniversary of Reformation Day, DW's Klaus Krämer explains how Martin Luther's publication of 95 Theses against so-called "indulgences" in the Catholic Church started a religious revolution.



Germany and the Protestant world is in the midst of the biggest "Reformation Festival" of all time. Since October 31, 2016, celebrations have been ongoing to mark the revolutionary events that began on that same day in 1517.

A little lesson in history: The monk Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) is frustrated by the Catholic's Church practice of selling indulgences, which allows people to buy spiritual salvation. He finds the practice fundamentally wrong in terms of theology.

His Bible study has left him with the unshakeable realization that a sinful person who believes in an all-powerful and absolute God is made righteous in the eye's of God through this very same belief and God's mercy – and not through money and good works.

Luther is convinced that this is the core of the Christian message. Consequently, the faithful can turn to their creator directly through prayer. They need neither church nor priest as a middle man – a radical idea that breaks the power of the Catholic Church, starting with its religious doctrine.



Martin Luther with the German-translated bible that would help revolutionize Christian theology

It's about power

Luther's conclusions open the door for new, unimagined freedoms. But the decades following his famous "Ninety-five Theses"— supposedly nailed to the door of the Wittenberg Church on October 31, 1517 — makes it clear that the Church is in no way, shape or form ready to give up its power without a fight.

At first, Luther's momentum keeps building. With the help of the moveable type printing press, invented by Johannes Gutenberg in 1450, he quickly writes out, duplicates and distributes this new collection of ideas challenging indulgences across the entire land.