

Bible Day

Martin Luther: Reformer and Translator

Martin Luther was born into a Roman Catholic family in Germany. Martin's family had great expectations for him. His father, Hans Luther, a miner, sent his son to school so he could become a lawyer. Martin studied diligently to earn a degree. But the course of his life changed when he was caught in a severe thunderstorm and believed he would die. He cried out to the patron saint of miners and promised to become a monk if his life were spared. Having survived, he would become a priest rather than a lawyer.

Martin's time in the monastery was difficult. He was filled with spiritual anguish, not finding the fulfillment he expected. He threw himself into the study of Scripture and eventually realized "the just shall live by faith." On October 31, 1517, Luther, frustrated with the teachings of the Catholic Church, nailed his 95 theses (or declarations) to the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg. For this act of defiance, he was excommunicated. Friends sequestered him in Wartburg Castle for his own safety.



Martin Luther Posting the 95 Theses, by Ferdinand Pauwels



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What man intended for evil, God meant for good. During his time in Wartburg, Luther began a German translation of the New Testament for his countrymen. As he translated, he sought to use the language of the common man.

Luther began his translation of the New Testament late in 1521, and completed it in March 1522. With the advent of the printing press, this New Testament became available in September, and was sold out by December 1522. As soon as he had completed the New Testament, Luther began work on the Old Testament. The entire Bible was available by 1534.



A page from Luther's translation of the Gospel of Matthew, 1524 edition (Photo credit: Paul K.)

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Bible Translation Today

Just as Martin Luther's translation of the Bible changed the lives of many German-speaking people, God's Word continues to do the same today. What Luther did, using the language of the common man and unifying the German dialects, produced a translation that was widely accepted. This is what BI is doing among dozens of people groups today with hundreds more to go. Without His Word in their own language, people struggle to understand God's truth, and spiritual growth is difficult.

If you would like to be involved in the life-changing ministry of Scripture translation, you may contact Bibles International at 616.942.7712 or by email at info@biblesint.org.



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