

Martin Luther's Trial

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[0:00] This evening is special or at least going to be different.

We are continuing our study entitled, *! Salvation God's Way*. But we're not going to be having a Bible study per se this evening.

! In its place, we're going to have a history lesson. And a real good one because I stole this from some really good historians. Specifically, we're going to look at Martin Luther on trial by the church at Rome.

And he's on trial for his views of their excesses, including the selling of indulgences. You remember those? Get your parents and grandparents out of purgatory for a fee.

And he was certainly on trial for his view of justification by faith alone in Christ alone as the grounds for the salvation of a lost sinner.

[1:14] And this is going to be a brief lesson. I'm going to get you guys out of here. You'll be home before the first quarter's over if you go straight home.

I'm going to be talking tonight about the diet of worms. You know, if all you had to eat was worms, I'd be on a diet. The diet of worms. And we're going back to 1521.

This was the imperial diet. And that means an assembly. It was an assembly of the Holy Roman Empire called by Emperor Charles V.

Or Charles V. As it said on the internet. It was held in a town in Germany called Worms at the Hesseloff Gardens in Worms.

That was an imperial free city of the empire. You could come there and worship and talk and debate. But this one was the most memorable for the edict of worms which addressed Martin Luther and the effects of the Protestant Reformation.

[2:34] It was conducted in 1521, basically January to May. And it was on again, off again. And the emperor, Charles V, was presiding.

Other imperial diets. I sometimes wonder if they pronounce that diet in Germany. I don't know. Took place at worms. You'll recall it was the years 829, 926, 1076, 1122, 1495, and 1545.

But when anybody writes about the various diet of worms, they're referring to this one in 1521. With Luther. That was by far the most famous.

History's practically forgotten what those others were even about. In June of the previous year, 1520, Pope Leo X issued a papal bull.

Now, we're Baptist folks. What in the world is a... I think of a rodeo, you know. A papal bull is a type of public decree or letter or charter issued by a pope of the Catholic Church.

[3:53] And you may recall the pope spoke with the authority of God on earth. He was Christ on earth. So what he said was treated as infallible.

That's a joke. But that's how they looked at it. Interesting. Papal bulls had names. This one was the *exerge domini*.

And that means, arise, O Lord. The pope's wanting him to arise and do something with Luther. That was the purpose for this papal bull.

The pope, when he issued this paper, said he had read Luther's 95 theses. I think I gave a copy of those out one Monday night.

I think I did. But he said he found 41 errors in Luther's summation known as the 95 theses, which, of course, we know Luther tacked on the door at the Church of Wittenberg.

[4:58] That was sort of the public post. And you could challenge people to a debate or a discussion. And he didn't intend for this thing to be distributed, but his students distributed it.

Even rewrote it from Latin into German. But the pope found all kind of errors in Luther's 95 theses and other writings.

Now, when I say errors, that's from the Roman Catholic standpoint. So Luther was summoned by the emperor, Prince Frederick III.

He was located in Saxony. And obtained an agreement, and this is real important, that if Luther appeared at this hearing, he would be promised by the Catholic hierarchy, including the pope, safe passage to and from the meeting.

So they issued this safe conduct passage where he could travel to and from without fear of being arrested, molested, killed, anything else.

[6:11] They had a little history in this because 100 years prior to that, John Huss was invited to come before a hearing.

And he was given safe passage. So on the basis of the safe passage, he went. As soon as he got there, he was seized, tried, and executed by the Council of Constance, the Catholic Council, in 1415.

And they ignored the safe conduct. And it's interesting. Over the years, popes have been approached about, would you issue a public apology for what you did to John Huss? And no pope ever has. They still haven't repented of that sin.

He's an interesting guy. A hundred years after he died, the Catholic Church dug up his bones and ground him to powder and threw him in a river. The river Seine, I believe.

And then it flows into the ocean. And they said, well, now Huss is touching the world. They wanted to get rid of him. He's now spread throughout the world. But the main event of the Diet of Worms relative to Luther took place from April 16th to 18th, 1521.

[7:32] Luther arrived at Worms on April 16th. He was told to appear before the Diet at 4 p.m. the following day.

He was given counsel, Dr. Jerome Schroff, Wittenberg professor in canon law. This was not a jurisprudence, secular law. This was biblical law.

He was going to act as Luther's lawyer before the hearing. And on the 17th of April, the imperial marshal, and I'm sure this will be on the test, but Ulrich von Phippenheim, and he had a herald.

He's a guy that proclaimed. Kasper Strum, or Sturum, they came for Luther. They wanted to get him. And Phippenheim reminded Luther that he could only speak when he was to answer direct questions from the presiding officer.

Well, who was the presiding officer? Johann Eck, very famous name within the Catholic Church. Eck asked if a collection of books was Luther's.

[8:51] They had a table there. They piled this full of Luther's writings, papers, pamphlets, books, put the 95 theses on top, and Eck starts the hearing, and he says, Martin, are these your books?

Please look at them. And Eck had the titles read. He picked out 25 of the books, and he also picked out the 95 theses, the resolutions concerning the 95 theses, a book that Luther wrote on the papacy at Rome, a book addresses to Christian nobility, a book on the Babylonian captivity of the church, and on the freedom of a Christian, all of which Rome opposed.

In response, Luther gave a brief speech, which has literally echoed down the quarters of time.

Luther had all these books laid out, and he said to Luther, will you recant of these writings that are opposed to both God and the Roman church?

Now, Luther gave the most famous response, and I'm going to read it in its totality here in a little bit, and you'll recognize it.

[10:25] It was a very famous response. It still resounds. The only problem was, that's really not what happened. That's not what happened.

Eck, the prosecutor, says to Luther, the great reformer, he says, Luther, Martin, will you recant, take back, what you've written here about the Pope, about the Catholic Church, about our interpretation of Scripture, will you recant?

And what Luther actually says is, can I have 24 hours to think about this? That was his response, and that got lost. You never see that in a movie.

There's been all kinds of movies with Luther being tried. Some of them go back in the 40s and 50s, but you never see that part. He said, give me 24 hours to think about it. Now, there's two ways to look at that.

Either Luther wanted time to be better prepared, and a lot of historians believe that. Others, though, say he was getting nervous. Rome had been burning guys at the stake, and Luther may have been pondering that.

[11:40] And here he was with an easy grasp. Even though he'd been given safe conduct, he knew John Huss had been executed under safe conduct. So he asked for 24 hours to think about it, and the time was given.

Now, this happened at 4 p.m., and they said, all right, come back tomorrow at 4 p.m., which would have been the 18th of April. And so Luther did.

And he spent time, and he told him, he said he prayed for long hours, consulted with friends, with mentors, and then he shows up at 4 p.m. the next day before the diet.

And so, when the counselor put the same question to him, Luther first issued an apology because he said he did not treat this court with proper etiquette, that he was pretty harsh with them.

And then in the answer to the first question, he said, I've looked through the pile. All of these writings are mine. I can affirm that.

[12:54] They're all mine. But they're not of one sort. They touch different subjects. And Luther went on to place the writings into three categories.

He said, there are works here which were well received even by his enemies. He said those he would never reject.

Second, there were books which attacked the abuses, lies of the Christian world and especially the papacy, the Roman world. And those, Luther said, cannot safely be rejected without encouraging abuses to continue.

If I reject those and recant, the Roman church isn't going to improve any. They're going to keep doing what they do. To retract, in Luther's words, to retract them would be to open the door to further oppression.

If I now recant these, then I would be doing nothing but strengthening tyranny. Now, you've got to realize the Pope's not there but his direct cardinals are there and they're listening to all this.

[14:09] This is not how you win friends and influence people. And Luther wasn't there to do that. He was there to stand up for the Word of God. And then third, he said, I have issued a tax on individuals.

For that, I apologize because I used very harsh tones in one of my writings. But he did not reject the substance of what he taught in them just that he was very harsh in his treatment.

And then he says, if it could be shown by Scripture that his writings were erroneous, then he would reject them. Just, he put the question back on them.

Show me where I'm wrong. And he concluded by this very famous stance that he took. He said, unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason, for I do not trust either in the Pope or in the councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves, and that was very true, I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God.

I cannot and will not recant anything since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience.

[15:47] May God help me. Amen. Now that was Luther. That was his response. And he knew what he was talking about. Do you know at one time there were three popes? They went to war against each other to decide who's the real pope here.

I mean, this was an abusive system. And Luther was attacking all that. Now, according to tradition, Luther has said to have declared, here I stand, I can do no other before concluding with, God help me.

Amen. Now, that didn't make it into the transcripts of the diet or the eyewitness accounts that he ever said this. Now, today we have scholars called revisionist historians who like to rewrite history and they doubt those words were spoken.

I tend to think that they were. I think he did speak them. And Eck informed Luther that he is acting like a heretic.

Eck was not happy with Luther's response. Martin, he said, there is no one of the heresies which you have torn the bosom of the church which has not derived its origin from the various interpretation of the scripture.

[17:04] So they thought only the pope could interpret scripture. the Bible itself is the arsenal whence each innovator has drawn his deceptive arguments. It was with biblical texts that Pelagius and Arius maintained their doctrines.

They were heathens. Arius, for instance, found the negation of eternity in the word and eternity which you believe in and admit. Joseph knew not his wife till she had brought forth her firstborn son.

And he said in the same way that that passage enchained him. This is what these heathens wrote. The fathers of the council of Constance condemned this proposition of John Huss.

The church of Jesus Christ is only the community of the elect. They condemned an heir for the church like a good mother. That was the church. Embraces within her arms all who bear the name of Christian.

All who are called to enjoy the celestial beatitude. Whatever that means. So, they all broke into private conferences which were held to determine Luther's fate but he was not arrested as was John Huss.

[18 : 21] Through negotiations by his prince principal protector Frederick III again Luther had in his hand a letter of safe conduct to and from the hearing.

After his dismissal he departed for his home in Wittenberg on a horse. More about that in just a moment. The Edict of Worms was a decree issued the 25th of May 1521 by Emperor Charles V and here's the declaration for this reason we forbid anyone from this time forward to dare either by words or deeds to receive defend sustain or favor the said Martin Luther.

I think they're ruling against Martin Luther. On the contrary we want him to be apprehended and punished as a notorious heretic as he deserves to be brought personally before us or to be securely guarded until those who have captured him inform us whereupon we will order the appropriate manner of proceedings against the said Luther and you know what that meant don't you?

Burning at the stake. those who will help in his capture will be rewarded generously for their good work.

Now they put a formal note on this because there was the papal nuncio at the meeting a guy by the name of Alejandro and he made pronouncements for the Pope and he proposed the denunciations of Luther that were embodied in the ruling by the Diet of Worms this was published the 26th of May the edict declared Luther to be an obstinate heretic and banned the reading or mere possession of his writings and he was a prolific writer he wrote a bunch so here we saw the culmination of this ongoing struggle between Martin Luther and the Catholic Church over reform and you may recall initially Luther wanted to work within the church he was a Catholic priest and he wanted to work within the church for reform they wouldn't hear of it they would not hear of it and especially he wanted to reform the money being donated for the purchase of indulgences which he knew was nothing more than

[21 : 15] Simon the magician from the book of Acts which we read last time however there were some deeper issues that revolved around both theological concerns on a theological level Luther had challenged the absolute authority over the Pope over the church by maintaining that the doctrine of indulgences as authorized and taught by the Pope was wrong and let me let me assure you the Pope had absolute authority technically he still does but back in those days he really did I mean he could order a guy executed and that was it and the Pope said Luther maintained that salvation was by faith alone sola fide without reference to good works alms penance or the church's sacraments they said it is works plus something and still is in the catholic faith works plus the sacraments works plus the giving of money to the catholic church and all these add-ons meaning that while grace was imparted through the sacraments the credit for the action belonged to

God and not to the individual he also challenged the authority of the church by maintaining that all doctrines and dogma of the church not found in scripture should be discarded well that's sola scriptura scripture alone which Luther of course held to fiercely if it's not in the book don't believe it if the Pope says something in conflict with the Bible don't believe the Pope well they couldn't stomach that and guys I've heard extreme modern day charismatics say that with my own ears I have the latest information from God if I say something conflicts the Bible you've got to believe me God's talking to me I would suggest I would ask that guy what did you eat the night before this may be indigestion but he challenged the authority of the church to protect the authority of the Pope and the church as well as to maintain the doctrine of indulgence which brought in huge sums of money all over the known world the Roman world ecclesiastical officials convinced

Charles the fifth that Luther was a threat and persuaded him to authorize his condemnation by the Holy Roman Empire now the Diet of Worms was the occasion for Charles to reform the administration of the whole empire empire and there were vast domains called the house of Habsburg the emperor was often on the road he needed deputies such as governors to oversee the Netherlands regents overseeing Spain for so often he was absent so he elevated his younger brother Ferdinand to the status of archduke Ferdinand became the regent and the government of

the Austrian lands and was Charles' representative in Germany and he was the chairman of the German imperial government Ferdinand's rule of the Austrian lands in the name of the emperor was confirmed in this

Habsburg compact and that's very important in the history of all this going on now return with me to this agreement that Luther could return home safely he had safe conduct although he knew what had happened to Hus he gets on his horse he's a little nervous and he starts riding to Wittenberg word came to Prince Frederick that the Catholics were out to arrest Luther and punish him on his way back to Wittenberg and punishment meant burning at the stake that's what it meant now Luther was in fact on his way home was kidnapped he was blindfolded and a hood put over his head he was tied put on the back of a horse and the kidnappers took him he had no idea where he was going to

Wartburg Castle before they took off the mask Wartburg Castle was where Prince Frederick his good friend lived Prince Frederick arranged a fake kidnapping the Catholic authority said we got him some guys arrested him and we saw him and they put a hood on him and they marched him off it was all fake but Luther didn't know they'd like to die of a heart attack he was a nervous wreck he thought well I'm going to be John Huss again I'm going to get burned at the stake they get him to Wartburg I don't know how long it took and they take this hood off and he's standing there among friends including Prince Frederick so he's condemned for writing and he gets to Wartburg Castle and during the first day that he was at

[26 : 51] Wartburg Castle he began writing the German translation of the Bible which is illegal at that time in the Catholic world the Bible was in Latin only the bishops archbishops and cardinals and popes were supposed to read that not even priests were supposed to be able to read that the Bible was chained to the altar so the people couldn't get to it well Luther says this needs to be in the language of the common man that same thing Huss had done so he starts writing translating the Bible into German Martin Luther's powerful testimony of faith at the Diet of Worms in 1521 made an indelible impression upon the minds of many including one man who would later become the German prince and many members of basically their house of representatives who were all Republican moreover Luther entered into correspondence with him discussing with this guy the most important problems of faith and the edict that came out of the

Diet was ultimately suspended although it was later reinstated when Luther emerged from Wartburg he was there a year the emperor distracted with other matters did not press for Luther's arrest Charles said I'll arrest him but he just put that on the back burner ultimately though there was great rising public support for Luther among the German people they demanded his protection by certain German princes and the edict of worms was never enforced in Germany the Pope wanted to enforce they said no we're not going to enforce it in the low countries and by that we're talking about low lands Belgium Luxembourg Netherlands the edict was eventually enforced and they rounded up Luther's most ardent and active supporters this could be done because these countries were under the direct rule of

Charles V and his appointed regent in Austria it was actually a woman named Margaret Duchess of Savoy that was Charles his aunt in December of 1521 a guy named Jacob Proust prior to the Augustinian monastery in Anwar was the first Luther supporting cleric to be arrested and prosecuted under the terms of the worms edict you couldn't read Luther he couldn't support Luther so they arrested him this guy caved in compelled to make a public recantation and a repudiation of Luther's teachings later that year the Catholic Church arrested several Augustinian monks named after St.

Augustine or Augustine in Antwerp and two monks John Van Essen and Henrik Voss said we're not recanting to recant would be to go against God so on July 1st 1523 they were both burned at the stake in Brussels and I'll tell you guys in Scotland a lot of men and women were burned at the stake and I've been right there that's a very moving experience to know that this guy died because he would not deny Christ right here in 1522 and in 1524 the diets of Neuenberg attempted to execute the judgment of the Edict of Worms against Luther but they failed the Reformation was born and the seeds sprouted all over Europe I mean it spread Geneva was Svingley it went up to Scotland with John Knox relative of my wife I've been to where he's buried in a parking lot church parking lot and they don't know if he's there for sure there's a little plaque in the asphalt I said that'll get a body detector you can detect those trouble is he's buried there with like 500 people they just dumped them in there but the reformation took everywhere including are you ready hold on to your seats the

new world that's the United States of America and if you read our history much of that was to escape the tyranny of the church in Europe for freedom in America and I've said before I'll say it again we are a product of the very reformation that we're talking about in this class Highland Park Baptist Church is a product distant but nevertheless a product of that reformation you can that be a