

# Famous Portraits Series

## Martin Luther

German Protestant Reformer

Founder of the Lutheran Protestant Faith

Born: 10 Nov. 1483 - Died 18 Feb. 1546

Issue 11



1. Left: Martin Luther as an Augustinian monk in 1517 (Aged 34)

2. Right: a posthumous portrait of Luther by an unknown artist



3. Martin Luther in 1525 portrait by Lucas Cranach (Aged 42)



4. Martin Luther in 1533 portrait by Lucas Cranach



5. Luther as an old man in 1543 by an unknown artist (Aged around 60)



6. Luther's parents by Lucas Cranach (1527)  
Hans Luther (c. 1450-1530)  
Margarete Luther (c. 1450-1531)

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### Image credits:

- <https://www.evangelicalprotestant.org/items/martin-luther-on-purgatory/?portfolioCats=3>
- <https://www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/online/word-and-image/1>
- [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lucas\\_Cranach\\_d.\\_%C3%84.\\_-\\_Portr%C3%A4t\\_des\\_Martin\\_Luther,\\_1525\\_\(Bristol\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lucas_Cranach_d._%C3%84._-_Portr%C3%A4t_des_Martin_Luther,_1525_(Bristol).jpg)
- File:1533 Cranach d.Ä. Martin Luther im 50. Lebensjahr anagoria.JPG - Wikimedia Commons
- Martin Luther and the 95 Theses - Summary, Origins & Video - HISTORY
- <https://trinityradioandvideo.org/meet-martin-luthers-parents/>

**Martin Luther** was born in Eisleben, Saxony, in modern-day Germany. His parents were of peasant origin. In 1484 the family moved to nearby Mansfeld, where Hans started business as a miner. At age seven, Martin entered school in Mansfeld. In 1501, Luther entered the University of Erfurt. It seemed he was on his way to becoming a lawyer, but in 1505, Martin had a life-changing experience. Caught in a horrific thunderstorm, he cried out to St Anne, the patron saint of miners, 'Save me and I'll become a monk!' The storm subsided and he was saved. The decision to become a monk was difficult and greatly disappointed his father, but he felt he had to keep his promise.

The first few years of monastic life were difficult for Luther, as he did not find the religious enlightenment he was seeking. In 1514, he was given the opportunity to visit Rome. But he returned to Germany more disillusioned and discouraged by the immorality and corruption he witnessed there among the Catholic hierarchy.

Upon his return to Germany, he enrolled in the University of Wittenberg where he received a doctorate, becoming a professor of theology. Through the study of the Scriptures, he came to realise that the key to spiritual salvation was not to fear God or be enslaved by religious dogma but to believe that faith alone would bring salvation. This period marked a major turning point in his life and set in motion the Protestant Reformation.

On October 31, 1517, Luther, angry with Pope Leo X's sale of indulgences to help build St. Peter's Basilica, nailed the *95 Theses* on the University of Wittenberg's chapel door. Aided by the printing press, copies of the *95 Theses* spread quickly throughout Germany and Europe.

In 1520, Pope Leo issued an ultimatum threatening Luther with excommunication which Luther publicly burned in defiance of the Pope's authority. In 1521, Luther was summoned before the Diet of Worms. Again, Luther refused to recant his statements. The Edict of Worms, banned Luther's writings and declared him a heretic. This made him a wanted man. But his supporters hid him in Wartburg Castle, where he translated the New Testament into the German language, giving ordinary people the opportunity to read God's word. This gained him many followers and considerable support from some of the German princes.

In 1525, Luther married Katharina von Bora, a former nun who had left the convent. Over the next several years, the couple prospered and had six children. Katharina proved herself a more than a capable wife and ally, as she greatly increased their family's wealth by shrewdly investing in farms, orchards and a brewery.

Luther died following a stroke while on a trip to his hometown of Eisleben. He was buried in All Saints' Church in Wittenberg, the city he had helped turn into an intellectual Protestant centre. Luther's writings and translations radically changed Christian theology. His influence continued to grow after his death, as his message continued to spread and many national Lutheran Churches were established in Europe and the world.

### Further reading:

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Luther](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther)
- <https://www.biography.com/religious-figure/martin-luther>
- [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic\\_figures/luther\\_martin.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/luther_martin.shtml)

## Questions

1. What was Martin Luther's family background?
2. What education did Martin receive before he became an Augustinian monk?
3. Identify from the text, the TWO most important turning points in Luther's life and give reasons for your answer?
4. What effect did the visit to Rome have on Luther's thoughts?
5. Which TWO of Martin Luther's actions against the teachings and authority of the Catholic Church mark the beginning of the Protestant Revolt?
6. How did Luther become so popular throughout Germany in a matter of months?
7. Mention THREE consequences of the Protestant Revolt on Christian Europe by the time of Luther's death in 1546.
8. Give THREE adjectives that best describe Luther's character and personality and give reasons for your answer.