

REFORMATION 500 WEEK 6: HERE I STAND

When a copy of Luther's 95 Theses reached Pope Leo X, he "dismissed the document as nothing more than the ramblings of a drunken German who, he believed, would think differently when sober" (Nichols, *Martin Luther*, 34).

Eight months later, in July 1518, the pope "issued a summons to Luther to appear before him in Rome. If Luther had gone to Rome it would have meant his certain death" (Kuiper, *Church in History*, 170). But Luther's prince, Frederick the Wise, intervened to protect his most famous and popular professor at the University of Wittenberg. "Frederick did not too well comprehend Luther but was concerned that a German subject should not be taken to trial outside of Germany, and should receive an impartial hearing" (Roland Bainton, *The Reformation*, 55).

In the meantime, at Leipzig in 1519, Luther debated Dr. Johann Eck, a trained theologian, who had already written a tract against the 95 Theses. Eck maintained that the Pope was the successor of Peter, and the vicar of Christ by divine right. Luther said this "was contrary to the Scriptures, to the ancient church, to the Council of Nicea, ...and rests only on the frigid decrees of the Roman pontiffs" (Schaff, 7:181). But when Eck had gotten Luther "to say that some of the teachings of Hus had been unjustly condemned by the Council of Constance," he "had made Luther take his stand openly on the side of a man officially condemned by the Church as a heretic" (Kuiper, 172). The Leipzig debate strengthened Luther's followers and won many new followers, one of whom was Martin Bucer, who later helped to shape the views of John Calvin.

On June 15, 1520, Leo X issued a papal bull, calling for the immediate restraint of the "wild boar in God's vineyard." Luther had 60 days after receiving the bull to recant or be excommunicated. After the 60 days expired, Luther burned "the Detestable Bull of the Antichrist" in Wittenberg.

"Yet, because of political considerations, excommunication did not immediately follow; and Frederick the Wise arranged that Luther should have a hearing before the diet [imperial meeting] of the German nation about to meet early in 1521 in the city of Worms with the newly elected Holy Roman Emperor Charles of Hapsburg [Charles V], the King of Spain" (Bainton, 58-59).

"Luther arrived to a hero's welcome at Worms.... When it was time for him to appear before the Diet, he was simply asked two questions: Are these your writings? Do you recant? Luther stood stunned before the assembly. How could they expect him to recant? His writings contained the words of Scripture, the words of the councils, and even the words of the popes.... Luther requested one day to think things over, and Charles V granted this request" (Nichols, 41).

The next day, April 18, 1521, Luther once again stood before the diet of Worms. He then delivered his famous speech. "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by clear reason, for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradict themselves, I am bound to the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand. May God help me."

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REFORMATION 500 WEEK 6: HEIDELBERG CATECHISM, QUESTIONS 16-19

Question 16: Why must he be a true and righteous man? **Because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which has sinned should make satisfaction for sin; but one who is himself a sinner cannot satisfy for others.**

Our Mediator must be a *real man*, because he that would make satisfaction *for* man should himself be very man, having sprung from the posterity of Adam, which had sinned (1 Cor. 15:21). And our Mediator must be a *perfectly righteous man*, for if he himself had been a sinner, he could not have escaped the wrath of God (Isa. 53:11).

Question 17: Why must he also be true God? **That by the power of His Godhead He might bear in His manhood the burden of God’s wrath, and so obtain for and restore to us righteousness and life.**

If our Mediator had been only a man, even a sinless man, he would have been crushed under the heavy weight of God’s wrath. It was necessary therefore that our Mediator should possess infinite strength that he might endure in his manhood an infinite punishment. But this he could not have done had he not been God (Acts 20:28).

Question 18: But who now is that Mediator, who in one person is true God and also a true and righteous man? **Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is freely given unto us for complete redemption and righteousness.**

The only Mediator between God and man is the God-Man – the LORD Jesus Christ – the eternal Son of God who became a man to reconcile God and man (1 Tim. 2:5; 3:16). The *second creation*, whereby sinners are made new creatures (1 Cor. 5:17), “was to be effected by the same person through whom the first creation was made [John 1:3]” (Ursinus). In Christ alone we have complete redemption and righteousness. He obeyed God’s law perfectly and He satisfied God’s wrath for our disobedience (1 Cor. 1:29).

Question 19: From where do you know this? **From the Holy Gospel, which God Himself first revealed in Paradise, afterwards proclaimed by the holy patriarchs [Abraham, Isaac, Jacob] and prophets, and foreshadowed by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law, and finally fulfilled by His Well-Beloved Son.**

From the holy law, we come to know our sin and misery; from the holy Gospel, we come to know our salvation from sin and misery through the Mediator Jesus Christ. The gospel (good news) was first revealed immediately after the Fall: God promised salvation through the *Seed*, who would be “bruised” (Gen. 3:15). God “preached the gospel to Abraham” (Gal. 3:8), saying: “in your *Seed* all the nations shall be blessed” (Gen. 22:18). All the blood shed on Jewish altars was a prophecy of the Son of God (the Lamb of God!) offering Himself to God as a sacrifice to be killed in our place. “He was *bruised* for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5). OT believers were saved by faith in the Messiah who would come in the flesh. NT believers are saved by faith in the Messiah who has already “given Himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph. 5:2).

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