



Why Martin Luther Challenged the Catholic Church

KS3 Ages 11-14 ⌚ 3 min read

Who Was Martin Luther?

Martin Luther was a German monk and teacher who lived from **1483 to 1546**. In the early **1500s**, he became very unhappy with how the **Catholic Church** was behaving. The Catholic Church was the most powerful religious organisation in Europe at that time, and it had enormous influence over people's lives and governments.

What Was Luther Angry About?

Luther had several big complaints. First, the Church was selling something called **indulgences** — basically, pieces of paper that promised to forgive people's sins (bad things they had done) if they paid money. Luther thought this was completely unfair. He believed that forgiveness should come through faith and prayer, not by paying the Church.

Think of it like a school saying you can get out of detention if you pay money instead of learning from your mistakes. That's what indulgences felt like to Luther.

Luther also believed the Church had become too powerful and too wealthy. Church leaders were living in luxury while ordinary people were poor. He felt they had forgotten their original purpose: to help people live better spiritual lives.

What Did Luther Do About It?

In **1517**, Luther wrote down **95 Theses** (basically 95 arguments) criticising the Church's practices. According to legend, he nailed them to a church door in Wittenberg, Germany. Whether he literally nailed them or not, his ideas spread quickly because of the newly invented **printing press**, which could copy documents much faster than handwriting.

Think of the printing press like today's social media — it allowed ideas to spread to millions of people incredibly quickly.

What Happened Next?

The Church leaders didn't like being challenged. They told Luther to take back what he'd said, but he refused. This led to something huge called the **Protestant Reformation**, where millions of people broke away from the Catholic Church and started their own Christian churches. Luther's actions changed religion in Europe forever and showed that people were willing to stand up to powerful organisations when they thought something was wrong.