

# The Reformation

*AD 1500–1600*

So many influences came together in the sixteenth century to bring about gospel renewal in Europe. Wycliffe and Hus had packed a powder keg. Erasmus had woven a fuse. On October 31, 1517, a hotheaded monk named Martin Luther lit the fuse and rocked the world.

Soon after, other reformers, like John Calvin and William Tyndale, in defiance of church and state authorities didn't let up in their mission to spread the Word of God to peasant and noble alike. Meanwhile, a radical group known as the Anabaptists arose and began to press the limits even further.



# Outline

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1. How reformation began with the righteousness of God.
  - a. Martin Luther:
    - i. Became a monk and sought righteousness (Ps. 31:1; Rom. 1:17).
    - ii. Posted 95 Theses to protest the sale of indulgences (October 31, 1517).
    - iii. Defended his writings at the Diet of Worms (1521).
  - b. John Calvin wrote *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in Geneva, Switzerland.
  - c. Ulrich Zwingli challenged church practices in Zurich, Switzerland.
2. How reformation turned radical.
  - a. Anabaptist Felix Manz became the first Protestant martyred by other Protestants (1527).
  - b. Menno Simons led a group of Anabaptists who later became known as Mennonites.

3. How reformation reached England.
  - a. William Tyndale translated the New Testament into common English (1525).
  
4. How reformation looked in the Roman Catholic Church.
  - a. Colloquy of Regensburg failed to unify Catholics and Protestants (1541).
  
  - b. Ignatius Loyola founded the Society of Jesus (Jesuit Order).
  
  - c. Council of Trent (1545–1563):
    - i. Denied justification by faith alone.
  
    - ii. Affirmed that the elements of the Lord's Supper become the body and blood of Jesus Christ.
  
    - iii. Proclaimed that the Bible is to be interpreted according to and with church tradition.

# Key Terms

**Anabaptists** – (from Greek, “again-baptizer”) They taught—contrary to infant baptism—that only believers should be baptized (“believers’ baptism”) and that the state should not enforce religious beliefs. Mennonites, Quakers, and the Amish have their roots in the Anabaptist movement.

**Colloquy of Regensburg (1541)** –

Conference held in Regensburg, Germany to bring Protestants and Catholics together. But after weeks of theological debate, the conference ended in a stalemate.

**Council of Trent (1545-1563)** –

After the failed attempt at unity in the Colloquy of Regensburg, the Catholic Church at the Council of Trent formally rejected Protestant teachings.

**Indulgences** – In Roman Catholic theology, it’s a release from the temporal (earthly) penalties that a person must endure to demonstrate repentance from his or her sins.

**Jesuit Order** – Religious order founded

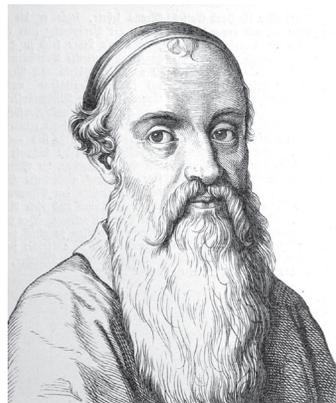
by Ignatius of Loyola in the sixteenth century. Today, Jesuits are one of the largest religious orders of the Catholic Church. They are known for their missionary work, social justice, and colleges and universities.

**Lutherans** – Protestant denomination emerging from the work of Martin Luther in the sixteenth century. Lutherans today number more than 60 million worldwide.

**Mennonites** – Anabaptist group founded by Menno Simons in the sixteenth century. Today, Mennonites are the largest of the Anabaptist groups. They are sometimes known as “peace churches” because of their emphasis on non-violence and pacifism.



*Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556)*



*Menno Simons (1496–1561)*

**Protestants** – Groups during the Reformation that rejected the supreme authority of the pope later became known as Protestants. Today, Protestants include denominations such as Lutherans, Presbyterians, Anglicans, and many others.

**Purgatory** – Roman Catholic teaching about an intermediate state of death where souls can be purged of sins and thereby become ready to enter heaven.

**Solas** – (from Latin, “alone”) Five statements that summarize the Reformation understanding of salvation: *sola fide* (salvation is through faith alone), *sola gratia* (salvation is by God’s grace alone), *sola Scriptura* (written witness to God’s way of salvation is Scripture alone), *solus Christus* (salvation is in Christ alone), *soli Deo gloria* (salvation is for God’s glory alone).

**Transubstantiation** – In Roman Catholic teaching, transubstantiation is a way of explaining how Christ is truly present in the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper. The substance of the elements—which is invisible—becomes the blood and body of Jesus, while the visible things of the elements—such as shape, taste, color, texture—remain unchanged.

## Know More About...

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“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son” (Gal. 4:4). Jesus came to earth on God’s timetable and in God’s way! The many events that came together in the sixteenth century demonstrate the goodness of God’s sovereign timing.

### The Importance of Theology

The word theology means “ideas or thoughts” (-logy) “about God” (theo-). The Reformation was a deeply theological movement. It began with Martin Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses, which were topics for theological debate. It continued with a theological textbook, John Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion. Along the way, the Reformation was fueled by theological debates that not only scholars but also lay-people heard. In fact, if only a few scholars in universities had embraced the Reformation message, the Reformation would likely have had no lasting effect! The success of the Reformation required not only scholars but also thousands of people from a variety of backgrounds to dig into Scripture, learn more, and teach theology to others.

List three reasons why the study of theology is important for every Christian:

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### **The English Bible**

Standing on the shoulders of those who had gone before him, William Tyndale took the work of John Wycliffe and Desiderius Erasmus a step further with his desire to put the Bible into the hands of ordinary people. It was Tyndale who told a priest, “If God spares my life, I will cause the plowboy to know more about Scripture than you do!” Tyndale’s work laid the foundation for the King James Version, which was first published in 1611.

In the book of Acts, Christians in Berea were commended for receiving “the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things [the teachings of Paul] were so” (Acts 17:11). How can Christians today recognize the leadership of their church leaders while pursuing their God-given responsibility to search the Scriptures for themselves?

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## How to Change the World

The following lines may be as old as the twelfth century AD:

“When I was a young man, I wanted to change the world.  
I found it was difficult to change the world, so I tried to change  
my nation.  
When I found I couldn’t change the nation, I began to focus  
on my town.  
I couldn’t change the town and as an older man, I tried to  
change my family.  
Now, as an old man, I realize the only thing I can change is  
myself,  
and suddenly I realize that if long ago I had changed myself,  
I could have made an impact on my family.  
My family and I could have made an impact on our town.  
Their impact could have changed the nation and I could indeed  
have changed the world.”

—*Author Unknown*

Transformation of entire societies can begin with transformation in one person’s heart. Consider Martin Luther’s recognition that he could be made right with God only by grace through faith in Jesus! Or what about William Tyndale’s declaration that he would make sure that the plowboy could someday read the Bible in ordinary English? In each case, personal transformation affected an entire society.

How is God calling you to respond to his work of transformation in your heart right now?

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What if the power of gospel of Jesus transformed your city or your neighborhood?  
How would your community look different?

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## Words from the Ones Who Were There

### **Martin Luther**

Speaking against the abuse of the indulgence system Martin Luther said, “They preach only human doctrines who say that as soon as the money clinks into the money chest, the soul [leaps] out of purgatory.... It is certain that when money clinks in the money chest, greed and avarice can be increased; but when the church intercedes, the result is in the hands of God alone” (Luther’s Ninety-five Theses).

Have you ever been placed in a situation like Luther where you knew you had to stand for the truth of Scripture, even if you might face backlash? Describe the situation and your response below:



*Martin Luther (1483–1546)*

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## John Calvin

John Calvin warned fellow Christians, “Beware lest our words and thoughts go beyond what the Word of God tells us.... We must leave to God his own knowledge ... and understand him as he makes himself known to us, without attempting to discover anything about his nature apart from his Word.”

How do people today sometimes try to discover the nature of God “apart from his Word”? What is the danger in this?

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*John Calvin (1509–1564)*

## Family Time

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*Get Together:* The sixteenth century was marked by three principles that revealed a deep divide between the Reformers and the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church: (1) justification by faith, (2) supremacy of Scripture, and (3) priesthood of all believers.

These important differences had an impact on Christian worship and practices. One particular area that was affected was the issue of baptism. There were also disagreements among Protestants about who should be baptized and when.

Talk as a family about your experiences of baptism. Were you baptized as an infant or as a believer? What is your church's understanding of right timing and practice for baptism?

*Read Together:* Matthew 28:19, Acts 8:36, and Acts 16:32–33.

*Learn Together:* Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli practiced infant baptism. Certain followers of Zwingli, however, disagreed. Convinced that the Bible taught that only believers should be baptized, the followers of Zwingli baptized themselves, earning the name “again-baptizers,” or “Anabaptists.”

Discuss these different perspectives on baptism with your children. Help them to understand the practices in your church. Help them also to see that faithful Christians disagree about the timing and the mode of baptism.

*Pray Together:* Some scholars believe that 2 Timothy 2:11–13 was an ancient hymn that Christians sang when new converts were baptized. Share this prayer based on these scripture verses: “God our Father, through baptism, we declare that we have died with your Son and that, because he has put to death the power of our sinful natures, we will live forever with him. Work in us by your Spirit so that we will endure to the end and will never deny the work of your Son. Help us to rest in the truth that, even when our faith fails, you are faithful still. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.”

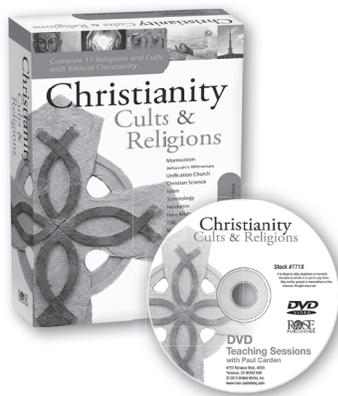
# Other DVD-Based Studies For Individuals or Group Use

## Christianity, Cults & Religions

Know what you believe and why!

Christians need to know what they believe. This excellent six-session DVD small group study teaches what the Bible says about God, Jesus, salvation, and more. It compares it to the teachings of other religions and cults. Covers Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and more. Sessions led by Paul Carden, Director of The Centers for Apologetics Research and former co-host of "Bible Answer Man" radio program.

- 771X** Complete Kit .....9781596364134
- 771DV** Leader Pack .....9781596364271
- 784X** Leaders Guide.....9781596364288
- 785X** Participants Guide.....9781596364295
- 404X** Christianity, Cults & Religions pamphlet.....9789901981403

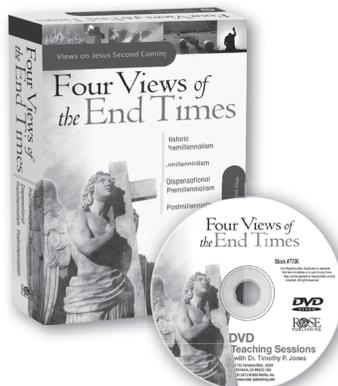


## Four Views of the End Times

Cut through the confusion about the *Book of Revelation*

What does the Bible actually say about the end times that lead to the return of Jesus Christ? The differing ideas that divide believers into four major points-of-view are examined in this Four Views of the End Times DVD-based small group study. This new six-session study shows four different Revelation time lines and tackles Dispensational Premillennialism, Postmillennialism, Historic Premillennialism, and Amillennialism. For each view, the objective study includes simple definitions, explanation and discussion of supporting Scriptures, an overview of the view's popularity, and a focus on what we can gain from studying this perspective, and common questions and answers.

- 770X** Complete Kit .....9781596364127
- 770DV** Leader Pack .....9781596364240
- 782X** Leader Guide: Four Views.....9781596364257
- 783X** Participants Guide: Four Views.....9781596364264
- 350X** Four Views of the End Times pamphlet.....9781596360891



## Feasts of the Bible

Connect the Hebrew roots of Christianity and the symbolism within each feast

Some Christians miss the importance of the biblical feasts, seeing them as merely "Jewish" holidays, but Scripture says these are the Feasts of the Lord God, established for all people for all time. Now you can connect the Hebrew roots of Christianity and the symbolism within each feast that points to Jesus Christ. The Feasts and Holidays of the Bible will also show you how to conduct your own Christian Passover Seder, where you will learn how all the Old Testament Passover activities point symbolically to Jesus.

- 101X** Complete Kit .....9781596364646
- 101DV** Leader Pack .....9781596364653
- 102X** Leaders Guide.....9781596364660
- 103X** Participants Guide.....9781596364677
- 455X** Feasts of the Bible pamphlet.....9781890947583
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