

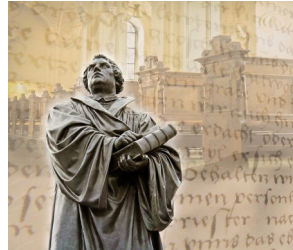


Reformation Reflections

LAST THINGS

At 62 years of age, Luther was old and ailing. He was old in a world where the average man might expect to live into his mid-forties. He was old and worn down by numerous physical ailments including kidney and bladder stones, arthritis, a ruptured ear drum, ear infection and vertigo. He was now blind in one eye from a cataract and struggled to keep pace under advancing heart disease.

It had been a long journey since that day in late October, 1517, when Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg and unwittingly ignited the Reformation. Now,



Luther was old from nearly three decades of ongoing struggle to liberate the Gospel from the twin tyrannies of the medieval church and state.

Luther was also old from dealing with the internal disputes and politics of a fledgling Reformation church, along with the demands on him as a leader and pastor. One such demand led him to travel to Mansfeld in the early winter of 1546 to resolve an economic and political dispute. As faithful pastor and servant, Luther went, realizing that every dispute between Christian brothers and sisters is always ultimately spiritual at its heart.

Luther went, not merely to arbitrate, but to bring reconciliation.

By February 17, the issue was resolved. But on the return, he was experiencing serious chest pains. He went to bed praying the common prayer of the dying, ***“Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God”*** (Psalm 31:5). His friend, Pastor Justus Jonas asked him, “Reverend father, are you ready to die trusting in your Lord Jesus Christ and to confess the doctrine which you have taught in his name?” Luther answered clearly, “Yes”.



A short time after midnight he suffered a stroke, and died in the early hours of February 18, there in Eisleben, the city of his birth.

Luther was buried in the Castle Church of Wittenberg under the pulpit. His remains are there to this day. ***“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful servants”*** (Psalm 116:15).

Luther was asked, “Are you ready to die trusting in your Lord Jesus Christ?” Asked about the Man Jesus Christ, God’s own Son, who also died and was buried. The Man who died for all that ails us, for every struggle, trial and dispute, and to liberate us in Himself from the twin tyrannies of sin and death; the Man who died to reconcile each and every sinner to our Almighty God and Father.

Only, the remains of our Lord Jesus did not stay buried – neither in Palestine, Wittenberg, or Montana. Death could not hold Him. He rose, and lives, and reigns to all eternity with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God forever.

And so to Luther, to each and every one of us, and to every child of Adam who ever was, whether worn old by age or struggle, threatened in youth, ravaged by disease, accident, illness, violence or threat, Jesus says this, ***“Behold, I make all things new”*** (Revelation 21:5).



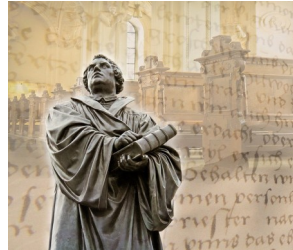


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