

THE FALL OF MYSTERY BABYLON

God's judgment on a world in rebellion —
and the calling of His people to holiness



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The Fall of Mystery Babylon

Also known as:

The Sale of Indulgences and the Beginning of the Revolt

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Introduction

There is a voice within me that I can no longer silence. A voice that grows louder as the truth becomes clearer and the injustice more unbearable. The eight chapters you are about to read are not random reflections, superficial Bible studies, or religious clichés intended to appease the masses.

They are a cry. A wake-up call. A judgment. And a commission.

Over the years, I have learned to see with different eyes—through the Word, through the lens of the prophets, and through the history of our people. Unexpected things—yes, even certain movies or world events—have given me insights. Not because they are sacred, but because they reveal how humanity has become. How far we have strayed. How much we have allowed Babylon into our hearts, while thinking we are serving God.

Mystery Babylon is not a myth, not a metaphor for distant times. It is here. It is in the system. In the economy. In politics. In religion. And, sadly, it is in the hearts of many who claim to be God's people.

These transcripts are not intended to point fingers, but to pull back the veils. To call the people of Israel, the true Israel, to return.

To obedience. To sanctification. To separation from the world system that God will judge.

“Come out of her, My people...” Revelation 18:4

That is the core. Come out of her. Not just outwardly, but inwardly.

Let yourself be cleansed. Let yourself be shaped. Let yourself be reconnected with God's law, His truth, and His purpose for your life—and for our people.

What you read here is not a religious book for your bookshelf.

It is a trumpet blast. A signal to the remnant. A spark in a time of darkness.

Read with open eyes. Consider with an honest heart. And if you hear what I hear... do what He says.

Chapter 1

The Sale of Indulgences and the Beginning of the Reformation

The sale of indulgences — it will come as no surprise that this topic is closely linked to Martin Luther and the Roman Catholic Church. This first part of the series focuses on the history of the Church's indulgence practices in the past, followed by a look at how the same practice continues today in a different form. The aim is to clearly explain the doctrine of indulgences, with a brief historical overview of Roman Catholic practice and the growing opposition to it in Europe in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. This resistance grew into what would become known as the protest against the Catholic Church—a movement that gained more and more followers and eventually came to be called "Protestants." This gave rise to the Protestant Reformation, from which many different movements emerged—there are now more than 260 Protestant denominations in the United States and Europe.

However, we will discover that many contemporary Protestants are no longer Protestant in the classical sense of the word. For this reason, it is important to reflect on the historical events surrounding the resistance to the sale of indulgences. We will also see whether this practice continues today, albeit in a disguised form.

One of the problems with this study is that many people who consider themselves Christian today—whether Catholic or Protestant—know very little about the origins of their faith group. They are unfamiliar with the origins of both the Catholic Church and Protestantism. Nevertheless, we will focus primarily on the practice of indulgences, because it had such a profound influence on the emergence of the Reformation.

An important figure in this early opposition to the church was John Wycliffe. This English theologian was called "the hothead." In 1379, he began translating the New Testament into English—a revolutionary act, because the church wanted to keep the people ignorant of the contents of the Bible. Lacking printing presses, Wycliffe distributed parts of the Scriptures through itinerant preachers who were not officially trained or ordained by the church. For his efforts, he was mocked and slandered; he was called "Dr. Perilous Doctrine" and "the devil's servant."

Wycliffe openly criticized the sale of indulgences, the veneration of saints, and the doctrine of transubstantiation—the belief that bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Christ during Mass. According to him, the church should not concern itself with outward appearances, but should follow the humility and poverty of Jesus.

John Hus, a Czech follower of Wycliffe, also opposed these Roman practices. He was burned at the stake in 1415. His followers, the Hussites, rebelled against the sale of indulgences in Bohemia, especially when the church used them to support political goals.

The meaning of the word "indulgence" is clear in Webster's dictionary. An indulgence is the remission of temporal punishment for sins that have already been forgiven through confession and repentance. In practice, this meant that after paying a sum of money, one could escape ecclesiastical or secular punishment—even for serious crimes such as murder. This trade in remissions reached its peak under Pope Leo X in the early sixteenth century.

Leo X, a member of the powerful Italian De' Medici family, became pope in 1513. He was not a man of piety, but an artistic bon vivant with expensive tastes. To finance his dream project — the reconstruction of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome — he sold ecclesiastical offices to the highest bidder. Even children were appointed bishops. Under his leadership, corruption flourished. Priests sold baptisms, marriages, and confessions, mainly to line their own pockets.

During this period, a market for relics also emerged. Duke Frederick of Saxony owned more than 19,000 such holy objects, including a hair of Jesus and pieces of the manger. According to Pope Leo, praying at these relics could shorten the time spent in purgatory by millions of years.

In 1517, Leo sent indulgence preachers to Germany to collect money. One of them was Johann Tetzel, who was active in Wittenberg, of all places—the very town where Luther lived. Tetzel used theatrical scenes to persuade people to buy indulgences: "As soon as the money clinks in the box, the soul jumps out of purgatory," he exclaimed. He even imitated the voices of the dead begging for help.

Martin Luther, himself a Catholic monk, was deeply shocked by these practices. He wrote 95 theses against indulgences, intended as an academic discussion. The title was literally: On the Power and Effect of Indulgences. The intention was not to start a revolution, but to raise questions about ecclesiastical authority.

Nevertheless, his action led to a widespread movement. Thanks to printing presses, his work spread rapidly. He argued that indulgences were dangerous because they gave sinners a false sense of forgiveness. He also wondered whether the money would not be better spent on feeding the poor than on ecclesiastical pomp and circumstance.

Luther himself struggled for years with his salvation. He tried to earn God's grace through good works, confession, and penance. But ultimately, he discovered in the Bible that salvation does not come through human effort, but only through God's grace. He read in Ephesians 1 that God chose His people before the foundation of the world. In Ephesians 2, it becomes even clearer: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Luther taught that humans do not need to do anything to be saved—only believe that they have already been accepted by Christ. "Accept your acceptance," as a later Lutheran summarized it. This put Luther at odds with the church of his day, as well as with many contemporary preachers. Modern evangelists such as Billy Graham proclaim that people are

only saved after they have accepted Jesus. But according to Luther, this is a reversal of the truth: God has already accepted us — believe that.

The practice of indulgences was therefore not only abusive, but also theologically incorrect. It proclaimed a God who could be bribed and turned salvation into a commodity. Luther, on the other hand, taught that God is faithful to his promise, regardless of

unfaithfulness of people. He pointed out that God had already fulfilled his promises in the Old Testament despite Israel's sins — not because of their righteousness, but because of his Word.

Thus began the struggle not only against the abuses of the church, but against a false image of God. The Reformation meant a return to Scripture—to faith in the free grace of God.

The Weakness of Modern Protestantism and the Mirror of the Past

In the previous part, we saw how the sale of indulgences became one of the catalysts of the Reformation, and how Martin Luther, after an intense inner struggle, came to the discovery that salvation is not based on human merit, but entirely on the grace of God. In this sequel, we delve deeper into Luther's thinking, and especially into the spiritual struggle that led to his theological break with the church of his time — and how his insights are more ignored than followed today.

At first glance, modern Protestants seem to be free from the Roman Catholic practice of selling indulgences. Yet the core of what Luther denounced—the belief that one must do or decide something in order to be accepted by God—is back in full force, albeit in a different guise. Where people used to buy indulgences, they now buy spiritual salvation by making a decision for Jesus. Instead of money as a means of exchange, it is now one's own will or conviction. But the principle is the same: man must do something to be saved.

Luther fundamentally rejected this way of thinking. For him, salvation had already been accomplished in Christ. He taught that humans are saved by grace, through faith alone, and that even faith does not come from humans themselves, but is a gift from God. “God has accepted us,” Luther said, “and our task is simply to believe that this is so.”

For Luther, this idea did not come from theory, but from personal despair. As a young monk, he sought salvation through pious deeds, penance, fasting, and prayer. He was strict with himself, to the point of illness, because he was trying to earn God's acceptance. And every time he thought he had done enough, a voice whispered, “Well done, Brother Martin—soon you won't even need God anymore.” He realized that if he could earn his own salvation, Christ would become superfluous.

It was only through the Bible itself that Luther learned that God's grace is a gift, not a reward. The blood of Christ saves—not our decisions, not our repentance, not our surrender. Christ alone. And that point shows how far today's gospel proclamation has strayed from the heart of the Reformation. Today, it's all about your choice, your decision, your conversion, as if your inner signature completes God's plan. But Luther said no—we are already accepted, by God Himself.

In the letter to the Ephesians — on which Luther relied heavily — we read in chapter 1:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love.”

This is the doctrine of election: we did not come to God, He came to us—even before creation. Salvation therefore does not rest on human choice, but on divine election. It is God who has accepted us in Christ, and not we who accept Him. Luther discovered this to his joy, and he called it “passing through the gates of paradise.”

Yet modern evangelism has exchanged this truth for a new system—a system in which man's decision seems more important than the blood of Christ. The logic has been reversed. People are taught, “If you accept Jesus, God accepts you.” But that essentially means that man must take the first step, and that God's grace follows only after human action. This makes God's initiative to save subordinate to the will of the sinner.

Luther saw how this kind of thinking was not only theologically wrong, but also made God a plaything of human will. He wrote:

“Suppose God's promise depends on our righteousness—then God would be a liar as soon as we sin, and only true again when we live righteously.”

He rightly pointed out that God did not base His promise to Israel on their faithfulness, but on His own faithfulness. In Deuteronomy 9, Moses said to the people:

“Know therefore that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land because you are a righteous people, for you are a stiff-necked people.”

In other words, God's covenant was based on His Word, not on Israel's behavior. The same is true for believers today. If our salvation depends on our faith, our conversion, our decision—then it is no longer grace, but achievement.

In Luther's time, there was a danger that people thought they were saved because they bought indulgences. Today, people think they are saved because they said a prayer or made a decision. In both cases, the core issue is that people trust in their own actions rather than in the finished work of Christ.

That is why Luther's message is still relevant today. He not only rediscovered the truth about God's grace, but he brought that truth back to the center of preaching. And he did so at the risk of his own life—not to found a new denomination, but to restore God's Word above human authority.

The Marketplace of Souls – Johann Tetzel and the Indulgence Trade

In the previous section, we saw how Martin Luther, based on God's Word, came to a profound discovery: salvation does not depend on human performance or decision, but is entirely God's work in Christ. In this section, we turn our attention to the stage where this truth first clashed with the church establishment: the public sale of indulgences in Germany, led by Johann Tetzel.

Johann Tetzel was not an unknown monk who happened to be preaching in the area. He was a salesman of forgiveness appointed by Rome—a specialist in selling

of mercy. Armed with price lists detailing exactly how much an indulgence cost for every conceivable sin, he traveled from village to town. He set up his wooden cross in the market square, placed his table, and began to proclaim his message in a loud voice:

"As soon as the coin clinks in the box, the soul springs from purgatory."

With theatrical flair, Tetzel even played to the crowd by imitating the voices of the dead: "Have mercy on us," he wailed, "for we are suffering in purgatory. You can save us with a small alms!"

Tetzel's "performances" worked. The people, raised in fear of eternal punishment and full of guilt, flocked to open their wallets. Not only could they buy indulgences for their own sins, but also for their deceased relatives — fathers, mothers, grandparents — so that they would be freed from purgatory more quickly.

This religious sales trick became the church's most important source of income. The sale of indulgences was, in fact, an institutional tax system disguised as spiritual service. National Geographic aptly described it: "The sale of indulgences was the main source of church income."

The papal indulgence sellers traveled as far as Saxony—the area where Luther lived and taught. Pope Leo X, a bon vivant who liked to use the church's coffers for art and construction projects, had launched this sales campaign to finance, among other things, the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica. It seemed like a logical plan: send out skilled salesmen, make money, and let the people believe that they were making an eternal profit.

But what Leo and Tetzel had not foreseen was that they had sent their campaign to the wrong place: Wittenberg. There lived and taught a monk who knew his Bible and was inwardly broken over the doctrine he had served for years. Luther saw how his parishioners atoned for their sins with silver coins, while their hearts remained unchanged. He saw how the doctrine of grace had been twisted into a system of false reassurance, in which true repentance had to make way for paid documents.

This was the moment when Luther decided to take action. On October 31, 1517—on the eve of All Saints' Day—he made his criticism public. He drew up 95 theses in Latin, intended for discussion among scholars. According to tradition, he nailed them to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. The title was:

"Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis indulgentiarum" "Theses for the explanation of the power of indulgences."

Although it may have been merely an invitation to academic debate, it was translated into German by printers and quickly spread among the people. Within a short time, Luther became—against his will—the face of a growing popular movement. His theological questions touched a raw nerve in the church system.

Meanwhile, Tetzel was weighed down by growing hostility. He became the face of shame and began to doubt his own role. Some sources mention that he withdrew to a monastery, deeply affected by the consequences of his work. Two years later, he died in seclusion. Luther, full of compassion, is said to have written to him:

"Don't take it too hard. You were not the father of this trade."

Luther understood that Tetzel was just a cog in a much larger system — a system he himself had served for years before rediscovering the truth in God's Word.

The significance of this clash is greater than is often realized. For although Tetzel and his cash box have disappeared, his message lives on in other forms. Where money was demanded then, faith is demanded now. Where relics were sold then, promises are made now in exchange for the "right decision." But the core remains: man must do something to be saved.

Luther's 95 Theses – The Beginning of a Theological Earthquake

It was not a rebellion, a call for revolution, and certainly not a plan to change the world. When Martin Luther wrote his 95 theses on October 31, 1517, it was initially an academic invitation to debate. But what was intended as a discussion among theologians quickly turned out to be the fuse in the powder keg of a corrupt church system. The content of the theses was sharp, simple, biblical—and devastating to the heart of the papal revenue model: the sale of forgiveness.

The 95 theses bore the official title:

"On the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences."

This detail is often omitted in popular histories. But Luther emphatically focused on the sale of indulgences—not in general terms, but with specific accusations.

He stated that:

True penance must come from the heart, not from the wallet. Forgiveness comes exclusively from God, not from a papal document.

Anyone who thinks they can receive forgiveness through indulgences without true repentance is being deceived.

The true treasure of the church is the gospel of God's grace — not a treasure chest full of money.

The pope has no power over souls in purgatory, since he cannot even forgive all sins on earth.

The truly rich are not those who buy indulgences, but those who humbly turn to God.

In thesis 82, Luther asks rhetorically:

"Why does the pope not empty purgatory for the sake of supreme love and the distress of souls—if he can—instead of for money?" And in thesis 45, he says:

"Christians must be taught that whoever sees a needy person and does not give to him, but spends his money on an indulgence, does not buy an indulgence, but God's wrath."

It was statements like these that showed that Luther saw beyond superficial abuses. He began to realize that the core of the doctrine he had been taught as a child—that God's favor could be bought—was completely contrary to the gospel of Christ.

Although Luther was still Catholic in his thinking at that time, his faith in the Church as an infallible institution began to crumble. He was not yet opposed to the existence of purgatory, nor to the pope as such, but he did oppose the abuse of doctrine for financial gain. His statements were the first step on a path that would lead him to a complete break with Rome.

At first, Luther's actions were not taken seriously in Rome. The church had faced criticism before, and it was expected that this monk would also be quickly silenced. But this time it was different. Thanks to the invention of the printing press, his theses could be disseminated rapidly—first in Latin, then in German. Within weeks, people throughout Germany knew his name. Within months, the debate about indulgences had become a debate about authority, truth, and the very core of the faith.

Luther had not intended a revolution, but suddenly found himself in the eye of a storm. And instead of backing down, he immersed himself even more intensely in Scripture. The more he read, the clearer it became: not Rome, but the Word of God was the only standard. The Bible, not the papal decree, must be the highest authority for doctrine and life.

In the months following the publication of his theses, his struggle shifted from criticism of practices to opposition to doctrines. Whereas he had initially questioned whether indulgences were biblical, he later began to argue that much of what the Church taught—including indulgences, purgatory, papal authority, and even the Mass—was contrary to the teachings of Christ.

This brought him into direct conflict with the most powerful religious organization of his time.

Meanwhile, the people were waking up. People began to ask questions they had not dared to ask before. If the pope did not hold the key to heaven, where was the certainty? If purgatory was not a guaranteed truth, what were they paying for? If forgiveness could not be bought, how could one be at peace with God?

Luther provided the answer. Not with new traditions, but with old faith—the faith of Paul, of David, of Abraham. Faith in a God who saves by grace. And that became the foundation of the Reformation.

Rome's Counterattack – Attempts at Condemnation and the Unintended Breakthrough

After Luther published his 95 theses and they spread rapidly throughout Germany and the rest of Europe, the papal authority could no longer remain silent. What had begun as a theological disagreement grew into an unprecedented crisis within the church. The Roman Catholic Church was in panic. Not because of a single monk, but because of the fire he had lit — a fire that threatened to consume the entire ecclesiastical structure.

In Rome, Luther was seen as a nuisance who had to be silenced quickly. Pope Leo X thought it was a temporary academic dispute — a matter that could be smoothed over at the right level. After all, he had dealt with worse troublemakers before. But it soon became clear that this Augustinian monk had no intention of retracting his words.

What followed was a series of attempts to make Luther recant. He was summoned for interrogation in Augsburg and Worms. There he would be pressured to renounce his works and theses. But time and again, Luther repeated his now famous position:

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or clear reason—for I do not believe in the pope or councils alone, since they often err and contradict themselves — I remain bound to the Scriptures I have cited, and my conscience is bound to the Word of God. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.”

These words, spoken at the Diet of Worms in 1521, marked the irreversible breaking point. Luther refused to recant his teachings unless it could be proven to him from the Bible that he was wrong. This was revolutionary. He placed the Word of God above papal authority, above councils, above tradition. Not the church, but Scripture was the highest authority. This made him a heretic in the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church, and a hero in the eyes of many.

Luther was banished—declared an outlaw—and his books were burned. Every citizen had the legal right (and duty) to capture or kill him. But God used the situation in a special way. The Saxon Elector Frederick the Wise — who had previously collected 19,000 relics — had Luther secretly abducted and brought to Wartburg Castle. There he lived in disguise as "Junker Jörg" and began work on his greatest weapon: the translation of the New Testament into German.

This was a turning point. For while the church tried to stifle his voice, Luther began to make God's Word accessible to the people. Where the pope spoke in decrees and prohibitions, Luther gave the people the Scriptures—in their own language. And with that one tool, he began to undermine the foundations of Rome, not with violence, but with truth.

Luther's translation was not only theologically influential, but also linguistically. It formed the basis for the unity of the German people in language and thought. The Bible was no longer a book for priests in Latin robes, but for peasants, citizens, and craftsmen. The Reformation became a popular movement.

Nevertheless, Rome did not remain idle. A counteroffensive was launched, both theological and violent. The Inquisition became more active, edicts were issued against Luther's writings, and "heretical" books were burned everywhere. In some areas, Lutherans were persecuted, tortured, and executed. But each time, the Word proved stronger than the sword.

The irony is that by condemning Luther, the church actually made his name greater. His theses became pamphlets, his pamphlets became sermons, and his sermons became translations. His insights resounded everywhere: that salvation is by grace, that faith is a gift from God, that Christ is the only Mediator between God and man—and that the pope has no divine authority.

For the first time in centuries, the church was being questioned from within. And even more than that, people began to listen. No longer was every Roman Catholic doctrine accepted uncritically. People dared to ask questions, to doubt, to read. And many found in the Bible what Luther had found: a God who justifies sinners, not on the basis of their merits, but on the basis of Christ's work alone.

Justification by Faith – The Discovery that Changed the World

At the heart of Luther's theology, and thus of the entire Reformation, is the doctrine of justification by faith. It is this truth that Luther himself described as "the gate to paradise" — the discovery that not only freed his own conscience, but also laid the foundation for a movement that would shake the world to its foundations.

What exactly did Luther mean by justification? In the Roman Catholic teaching of his day, righteousness was a process—a collaboration between God and man, in which man slowly became righteous in God's eyes through sacraments, good works, penance, and indulgences. Righteousness had to be built up, maintained, and—if one sinned—restored through the church.

But when Luther read Romans 1:17, a new world opened up: "The righteous shall live by faith."

There, in that one verse, Luther discovered that God's righteousness was not a reward for human effort, but a gift. Not something that is built up, but something that is received. God does not justify the sinner because he is righteous, but because He wants to. It is an act of God — completely one-sided, completely gracious.

Luther thus came to realize that he was justified by faith alone (*sola fide*), by grace alone (*sola gratia*), through Christ alone (*solus Christus*), according to Scripture alone (*sola scriptura*), to the glory of God alone (*solus Deo gloria*).

These were not theological slogans. They were spiritual anchors that held him fast in a time of personal turmoil. For those who live under the law live under fear. Luther knew that fear better than anyone. He knew the pain of a conscience that cried out for certainty and the despair of a soul that could find no rest in its own achievements. Until he discovered that the

righteousness that God requires of me is the same righteousness that He gives me in Christ.

That did not mean that Luther abolished the law or that sins were no longer serious. On the contrary. Precisely because he knew the seriousness of sin, he understood how necessary grace was. But he argued that good works are the result of justification—not the condition. Faith alone is sufficient, because Christ's work is complete.

This teaching brought him into sharp conflict with Rome. For if justice no longer came through the Church, then the papal system lost its power. If a sinner could find forgiveness and acceptance with God directly, through faith—without the intervention of a confessor, priest, or pope—then the entire hierarchy became superfluous.

And Rome understood this only too well.

The battle over the doctrine of justification is therefore not a minor dogmatic difference. The question is: Who is the mediator between God and man? Is it Christ alone? Or is it Christ plus the sacraments of the church? Luther said with Paul: "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul summarizes it this way:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

But this is precisely what is being undermined again today. For even in the contemporary evangelical world, the message is often: "If you open your heart, if you accept Jesus, if you believe, then God will accept you." This reverses the order. Luther said: God has already accepted you in Christ. Believe that. But modern preaching says: If you choose first, then God will choose you.

It seems innocent. But in reality, it turns the Reformation back toward Rome. Man is once again made responsible for his own salvation. His will, his choice, his moment of conversion becomes the decisive point. As if God's salvation waits for human consent.

But as Luther discovered, true salvation is an act of God. It is not the hand of the sinner reaching out to God, but the hand of God lifting the sinner up. It is not the spiritual achievement of man, but the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to him. It is not "I chose Jesus," but "He chose me before the foundation of the world."

That is the shocking simplicity of the gospel. And it was precisely this simplicity that became Luther's most powerful weapon against the theological heaviness of his time. He brought the gospel back to its origins: the message that God justifies sinners—not because of their works, but in spite of their works—by grace alone.

The Reformation as Social Revolution

Luther's discovery of justification by faith alone was first and foremost a spiritual liberation. But as with all true spiritual changes, its impact was not limited to the inner realm. The truth he proclaimed began to spread like a river throughout Europe, touching every area of life: religion, education, economics, politics, and even culture.

The core of the change lay in authority. For centuries, the Roman Catholic Church had had sole authority over spiritual and moral matters. The pope spoke, and the faithful obeyed. The Bible was in Latin, inaccessible to the people. Only the priest determined what was the Word of God and how it should be interpreted. Luther brought about a radical break with this tradition: *Sola Scriptura* — Scripture alone is the highest authority.

This had far-reaching consequences. As soon as the Word of God became available in the vernacular, people could read for themselves what it said. And when Scripture speaks directly to the people, any human system that sets itself up as an intermediary loses its absolute power. The pastor, priest, or pope is then no longer the source of truth, but a servant of that truth. This undermined the priestly hierarchy of Rome at its core.

Luther's translation of the Bible into German became a catalyst for popular development. Where people read the Word, a hunger for education arose. Luther and other reformers encouraged the establishment of schools, not only for priests, but for boys and girls, so that everyone could read the Scriptures for themselves. This was revolutionary at the time: education was no longer a privilege for the elite, but a duty for the entire population.

The Reformation also had an impact on the economy. The idea that work and vocation (Beruf) were God-given gave new dignity to all professions. Not only were spiritual offices considered 'holy', but the work of farmers, craftsmen and merchants was also seen as service to God. This contributed to what would later be called the 'Protestant work ethic' and indirectly influenced the economic prosperity of many Protestant areas.

Politically, the Reformation meant that princes and city councils gained more control over religious matters within their territories. When a prince joined the Reformation, he could withdraw from the influence of Rome, which was not only spiritual but also financially burdensome. Taxes to the papal treasury could be stopped, and monastery possessions came under local control. This strengthened the autonomy of many areas in Germany, Switzerland, and beyond.

However, this shift also brought tensions. Where truth liberates, it also provokes resistance. The Reformation led to clashes between reform-minded areas and loyal Roman Catholic areas, which would eventually result in religious wars, such as the Schmalkaldic War and later the Thirty Years' War. Although Luther himself did not call for armed resistance, his teachings were seen by many as justification for breaking away from Rome, even by force.

Culturally, much changed. Churches were stripped of excess and idolatry; singing hymns in the vernacular became a hallmark of Protestant gatherings.

Luther himself wrote songs, the most famous of which was *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* (A Mighty Fortress Is Our God) — a musical manifesto of trust in God's sovereignty.

The social upheaval caused by Luther's work cannot be overestimated. The Reformation not only freed the human soul from the chains of a belief in merit, but also broke down structures that had seemed unassailable for centuries. It placed the Word of God at the center, educated the people, and laid the foundation for freedom of conscience — a concept that would later have a major impact beyond the religious sphere.

Nevertheless, we must realize that the Reformation was not a completed work. Luther himself warned that as soon as the Word was pushed aside again, the old errors would return— perhaps in new forms, but with the same spirit. And as we see today, his warning has proven prophetic.

In the next and final part, we will examine how the core truths of the Reformation are often obscured in our time, how “modern Protestantism” has in many ways returned to the spirit

of medieval Rome, and why Luther's message is still as urgently needed today as it was five centuries ago.

Back to Rome – How the Protestant Church Lost Its Foundation

We have come to the end of this series on the sale of indulgences, Martin Luther, and the Reformation. What began as a personal quest by a troubled monk for peace with God grew into a movement that shook Europe to its foundations. But what is the situation today, more than five centuries later?

The sad truth is that much of what Luther and the other reformers brought to light has once again disappeared into the mists of tradition, human authority, and meritorious religion. Today's Protestant churches—at least the majority of them—are no longer Protestant in spirit or doctrine. They have returned to the old spirit of Rome, not necessarily in outward appearance, but at the core of their message.

For what is the core of medieval Roman Catholic thinking? That man must contribute to his own salvation. That he must do something—whether pay, pray, or make a decision—to get God to accept him. That God's grace depends on man's response. That salvation is not complete until the sinner says yes.

And that, brothers and sisters, is exactly what is preached today in thousands of Protestant churches. The modern evangelist no longer says what Luther said: "God has accepted you in Christ, believe that and live." No, he says: "If you repent, if you accept Jesus, then God will accept you." It seems sincere, it sounds pious, but it is nothing more than a repackaging of the old indulgence. No longer do you buy an indulgence with silver, now you buy acceptance with a choice. But it is the same mercantile spirit.

Man is once again placed at the center. The cross of Christ is once again torn down from its exalted place as the finished work of redemption and replaced by a "moment of choice," a "prayer," an "intellectual decision." Grace is once again turned into a

transaction. Certainty becomes uncertainty again. And the peace of the gospel is replaced by the toil of religious activity.

Luther's message was revolutionary because he did not start with the will of man, but with the will of God. He said, "God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world." Not because we believed, but because He wanted to. Not by our will, but by His plan. Not because we opened our hearts, but because He opened our hearts.

The modern message—even within many so-called "Bible-believing" churches—reverses this. There, it is said, "God is waiting, but you must choose." That sounds friendly. But in reality, it makes the almighty God dependent on the decision of a mortal human being. And that is not the gospel. That is human philosophy dressed up as religion.

How ironic that Luther's church has now forgotten its roots. Most Lutheran churches have become modernist. The free evangelical movements preach a gospel of choice. And even the so-called "Bible-believers" speak of grace, but preach law: "If you don't choose, you're lost." But that is not sola gratia — that is gratia + choice.

Today people say, “God has done His part, now it’s up to you.” But Luther said, “God has done everything. Believe it.” And that is the difference between life and death. Between salvation by grace and a religion of works. Between Christ as Savior, or yourself as the key to your eternal destiny.

Luther's message is therefore not outdated. It is more relevant than ever. For while the world once again submits to religious slavery — be it Roman or evangelical — the cry still rings out:

"The righteous shall live by faith."

Not from feeling. Not from decision. Not from piety. But from faith in what God has already done.

And so the call of this series is simple but radical:

Return to the Word. Return to the gospel of grace. Abandon human attempts to please God, and trust in the finished work of Christ alone. Not with a hand full of good intentions, but with empty hands. For only then can we truly say: “Soli Deo Gloria — to God alone be the glory.”

Chapter 2

The True Power Behind the Reformation – More Than Just Theology

In this second part about the sale of indulgences and Martin Luther, the veil is lifted further on the deeper forces that lay at the heart of the Reformation. The question is not only what Luther proclaimed theologically, but also what he undermined: a power system that was deeply entrenched not only religiously, but also financially and politically in sixteenth-century Europe. It was not merely a theological rebellion—it was a threat to a financial empire disguised as a church.

The speaker reminds us that it was ultimately God's timing that Luther used. The Protestant Reformation led not only to spiritual awakening in Europe, but ultimately to the establishment of Protestant Christian nations such as the United States. These were founded on the biblical principles that Luther rediscovered—not on the foundations of Rome or rabbinical Judaism, but on the pure gospel of grace.

The practice of selling indulgences, which Luther opposed, was not a marginal phenomenon, but the economic engine of the medieval Roman Catholic Church. An indulgence was a negotiable document that offered forgiveness for sins in exchange for money, sometimes even to prevent earthly punishment. People could buy indulgences for themselves, for others, or for deceased family members—with the primary goal of shortening their time in purgatory.

The modern press — even in secular articles about Luther's 500th birthday — had to acknowledge that this entire structure was steeped in power and money. As one journalist remarked: "The spark was theological, but the struggle was about power and money." The reformers thus endangered not only a doctrine of faith, but an entire economic network in which priests, bishops, and popes flourished financially through fear and superstition.

A joint report by Lutherans and Catholics acknowledged that the sale of indulgences was an "important source of papal income." Many priests lived off the money they received for Masses, indulgences, and relics. And the higher clergy—often from wealthy noble families—literally bought their way into ecclesiastical offices, only to use church money to build castles, erect palaces, and wage wars. All at the expense of the toiling masses.

The speaker shows photos of palaces in Austria built for bishops. Luxurious summer residences, hunting lodges, country estates—all financed with money from sinners who thought they were saving their souls. These buildings still exist today and bear witness to the excessive wealth that made the sale of indulgences possible.

Luther's rise was therefore more than a theological confrontation. He asked the fundamental question: Is salvation a free gift from God, or can it be bought? His study of the Bible led him to a powerful, clear answer: salvation is free, by grace, not by works. And that made his teaching explosive. Not only because it contradicted Rome's teaching, but because it undermined the Vatican's money supply.

As Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... who has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless." And in Ephesians 2:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

No pope, no priest, no payment could surpass that gift. But that was precisely the foundation on which the church had built its system. Indulgences undermined this gospel, and Luther's preaching undermined indulgences. In doing so, he struck at the heart of medieval financial power.

The speaker points to another revelation: that Archbishop Albrecht, who was involved in the indulgence trade in Germany, was heavily in debt to the Fugger bankers of Augsburg. Pope Leo X helped him out by issuing a papal bull: half of the proceeds from the sale of indulgences went to the construction of St. Peter's Basilica, the other half to paying off Albrecht's debt to the bankers. So behind the theology was financial corruption — and behind that, bankers. If you follow the flow of money, you can see the whole structure of power and deception.

Finally, the speaker puts forward a challenging idea: that today — just as in Luther's time — forces are at work that are merging theology and money into a single system. Many speak out against immorality, but avoid the subject of money. Others expose financial manipulation, but without the Word of God as their foundation. Only biblical truth can expose both.

Luther's Unintended Revolution – Why Reform from Within Failed

Although Martin Luther did not write his 95 theses in 1517 with violence or rebellion, but as an invitation to debate among theologians, he unintentionally unleashed a wave that could not be stopped. Luther was not a revolutionary at heart. He was a Catholic priest, a monk who initially hoped to reform the church from within. His desire was not a break, but purification. But as the

speaker rightly points out, "In the end, all his efforts did nothing to change the structure of the Roman Catholic Church – he had to leave."

Many today, as in Luther's time, are trying to reform their church or denomination from within. They remain loyal to a church that teaches error, hoping that their voice will bring about change. But Luther's example shows that reform within a corrupt system rarely succeeds. The church did not want correction—it defended its power, its doctrine, and above all, its money.

National Geographic described how the initial reaction to Luther's 95 theses was actually quite lukewarm. No one realized that this Latin text was the beginning of a global upheaval. But when the theses were printed in German and distributed among the people, a fiery movement was awakened. Luther became the face of an undercurrent that had been bubbling for some time: the conscience of ordinary people turning against the abuse of the clergy.

What Luther did was to let the voice of Scripture be heard above that of the priest. He asked questions that defied the logic of the ecclesiastical system:

"If the pope truly has the power to free souls from purgatory, why does he not do so out of love, rather than for payment?"

That question alone was fatal to the principle of indulgences. It struck at the heart of the hypocrisy. In thesis 86, Luther posed another confrontational question:

"Why does the pope not build St. Peter's with his own money instead of that of the poor?"

Luther's attacks were not only theological. They struck at the economic structures of the church. He pulled the rug out from under the papal revenue model. Catholic doctrine was essentially based on transactions: sin→ penance→ indulgences→ salvation. By dismantling this scheme, Luther disrupted an entire social order.

It is now clear that Luther's protest was also the result of what he did not know. When he sent his 95 theses to Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz—in the hope that he would curb the excesses of indulgence sellers such as Johann Tetzel—he was unaware of the financial corruption behind the indulgence trade. Albrecht had bought several bishoprics and was heavily in debt to the Fuggers, an influential banking family from Augsburg. Pope Leo X helped him out by approving a sale of indulgences: half of the proceeds went to the pope, the other half to Albrecht's debt repayment.

Luther had thought that the pope, if he knew how his subordinates were abusing the indulgences, would intervene. But the opposite happened: his theses were sent to Rome, and a trial to suppress this "reckless monk" began. The church was not interested in truth — but in preserving its income.

Here we see how the power of Luther's message lay not only in his theology, but also in his honesty. He did not want revolution, but truth. He believed that the system could still be corrected. But once he understood how deep the rot went — all the way to the papal palace — there was no turning back.

Luther ultimately stood alone against emperors, bishops, and priests, and spoke the words that would echo for centuries:

"Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen."

Those words are often romanticized. But their power lies in their context: one man stood against the most powerful religious system in the world. Not with a sword, but with the Word of God. Not with an army, but with an open Bible.

The speaker compares this to today: many who preach the truth today are still trying to reform their church. But Luther's life shows that there comes a point when separation is inevitable. Religious systems built on lies, money, power, and tradition will not voluntarily submit to the authority of Scripture.

Luther's conclusion was therefore not that the church needed to be reformed, but that it had to be abandoned. He withdrew—not out of cowardice, but out of loyalty to Christ. And millions followed him. Not because he was the leader of a movement, but because he brought them back to the foundation: sola scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide, solus Christus.

Is Grace for Sale? – The Eternal Question that Divides the Church

The question Martin Luther asked his contemporaries—and which still cuts like a sword through the church and conscience today—is this: Is God's grace a free gift, or must it be paid for? That was the crux of the Reformation. Not the details about relics, indulgences, or Latin Masses—but the fundamental question of whether salvation is truly free.

According to the church at that time, the way to heaven was paved with money, works, and obedience to papal authority. Even those who lived in grace still had to go through purgatory. For many, this meant centuries of suffering — unless they had paid enough to shorten the time. It was even possible to buy indulgences for deceased family members. If one paid enough, one could pull them out of purgatory. Soul trading, packaged as piety.

The speaker shows an original indulgence document, still preserved, stating that the buyer has been forgiven certain sins. This document was printed in Latin—the language of the elite—so that ordinary believers could not even read what they had purchased. But the people believed: this piece of paper was the key to heaven.

Luther's response? Devastating. In his theses, he asks aloud:

"If the pope really has the power to rescue souls from purgatory, why doesn't he do so out of love, rather than greed?"

His logic was not only sharp, but morally inescapable. He brought theology back to the level of conscience. For who dares to say that God sells mercy?

But the Catholic Church dared to do so. And it built its wealth on it.

According to George Cornell's report, quoted in this lecture, Luther's protest was not only an attack on doctrine, but also on a financial power structure. And that is important. Luther

touched the system behind the system. He not only cut into the doctrine of indulgences, but into the entire revenue model that underpinned it.

A striking example is Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz. He had borrowed money from the Fugger bankers to obtain three bishoprics. He then had to repay that debt—and used the proceeds from indulgences to do so. Half went to St. Peter's, the other half to the Fuggers. So what was being sold? Not God's forgiveness, but papal favor, religious positions, and ultimately, people's souls.

Here we see the true nature of indulgences: it was a system in which people's sense of sin was exploited to pay off the financial debts of clergy. Conscience became a market product. And Rome was at the head of that market.

Luther, on the other hand, read Ephesians 1 and 2:

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.” For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

These texts are the absolute opposite of what the Roman Catholic Church preached. No works. No payments. No intermediaries. Only grace, received through faith, based on Christ's blood.

Luther's preaching thus undermined not only Rome's doctrine, but also its power. For if forgiveness does not require priests, indulgences, or sacraments, why go to church—let alone pay?

And that is also why the church reacted so fiercely. The pope felt threatened. Not because a monk had posted a few theses, but because he was beginning to expose a system in which spiritual slavery was used to amass wealth.

In his subsequent sermons, Luther went so far as to claim that the present life could be the true purgatory—the place where God shapes, tests, and purifies us. This called the entire doctrine of purgatory into question.

It is important to note that at the beginning of his protest, Luther still believed in the existence of purgatory and even hell. But as he delved deeper into Scripture, he abandoned that doctrine as well. Ten years later, he openly declared that the doctrine of a burning hell was not scriptural and had been invented by the pope to keep the people in fear.

This development reminds us that reformation means growth. Luther also grew. He started out as a priest. He thought the pope was sincere. He hoped for reform from within. But Scripture led him further and further outward, until he ultimately lost everything—except the truth.

The question then remains the question today:

Is grace a gift, or is it a bargaining chip? Should we believe in Christ, or should we pay for God's blessings? Is salvation in the hands of man, or is it entirely in God's power?

A Church Built on Sand – Why Rome's Foundation Always Wobbles

This fourth part takes a closer look at the inner structure of the Roman Catholic Church—and why reform from within ultimately proved impossible. It was not just a matter of wrong practices or corrupt leaders; according to Luther, the entire foundation of the papacy was built on human institutions, not on the Word of God. And a house built on sand will eventually collapse — whether one tries to repair it or not.

The speaker quotes the Catholic Church's catechism, which still teaches that the pope is "infallible" in matters of faith and morals when he speaks *ex cathedra*. This doctrine was officially established in 1870, during the First Vatican Council, but had in fact been practiced for centuries. What Luther had already suspected was then confirmed: Rome saw the pope as the unquestionable supreme authority — even above Scripture.

This was unacceptable to Luther. For how could a human being—however pious—stand above the Word of God? He rejected the idea that church tradition was equivalent to Scripture, and opposed it with *Sola Scriptura*: Scripture alone is normative. In doing so, he cut off the foundation of papal authority.

But Rome did not give up. The Catholic response to Luther was not a biblical refutation, but a strengthening of papal authority. At the Council of Trent (1545–1563), Luther's teachings were officially condemned, and it was reaffirmed that:

The pope is the keeper of the keys of heaven;

The tradition of the church is equal to the Bible;

Indulgences, relics, and good works are necessary for forgiveness;

Purgatory really exists and indulgences shorten the time spent there.

Rome therefore changed nothing in substance—only in presentation. The sale of indulgences became more moderate, but the doctrine remained unchanged. The "price" was concealed, but the "trade" continued.

The speaker compares this manipulation to what we see in many modern churches today. The theology seems milder, but the foundation is still human-centered. Where in Rome the pope is infallible, in many evangelical churches the free will of man is infallible. It is no longer said that you must buy indulgences, but that you must make a decision for Jesus—as if God is waiting for your permission to save you.

But that is not biblical grace. For true grace does not depend on human will or performance. As Paul wrote:

“So it does not depend on him who wills, nor on him who runs, but on God who shows mercy.”

(Romans 9:16) Jesus Himself

also said:

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.” (John 6:44)

The Reformation brought these truths back to the center. But today they are once again being ignored—even within Protestant circles. “Free will” has become the new papacy

. And where Luther placed Scripture at the center, many today place their own experience, decisions, or feelings at the center. The Bible is once again being pushed aside.

The speaker emphasizes: if the foundation is wrong, it does not help to straighten the walls. A church built on human authority, whether papal or evangelical, will sooner or later falter. Only those who build on the rock—Christ and His Word—will stand.

And that is why Luther's message is just as urgent today as it was then. For just as in the sixteenth century, God is calling His people today to come out of Babylon—not physically, but spiritually. To leave the system of religious lies and power, and turn to the true gospel of grace, faith, and Scripture.

The Fruits of the Reformation – Word, Teaching, and Culture

In this fifth part, we see how the power of the Reformation was not limited to church doctrine. The truth rediscovered by Luther spread like wildfire through society. When the Word of God is freed from the hands of a closed religious elite and returns to the language of the people, something happens that no human system can stop: the spiritual and social reconstruction of a people begins.

One of the first fruits of the Reformation was education. Luther saw it as a duty that every person should be able to read the Word of God for themselves. And that meant learning to read. Not only men, but also women. Not only priests, but also farmers. Not only the elite, but also the common people. The Bible and literacy went hand in hand.

Luther's translation of the Bible into German had a profound influence. Not only on faith, but also on language development, unity, and self-awareness. Just as the Statenvertaling would later shape the Dutch language, Luther's translation gave the German people a common scriptural basis. It was not just a book; it became the foundation for education, justice, and culture.

Churches changed. Instead of Latin masses, the vernacular became central. Instead of priestly monologues, there was communal singing. Luther himself wrote songs, including *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* — the "battle hymn of the Reformation." The Protestant tradition became one of scriptural education, sung truth, and public preaching.

Families also changed. The Bible came onto the table. Family services were established. The father was once again seen as the spiritual head, and education was given a biblical interpretation. Mothers were no longer kept out of the spiritual realm but were taught the Scriptures. Women learned to read, contributed to discussions, and actively participated in the life of faith.

Society as a whole underwent a change. Governments were called upon to rule justly according to biblical standards. Care for the poor was given a place. Work was no longer seen as 'worldly', but as a calling from God. The so-called Protestant

work ethic found its roots here: labor as a tribute to God, not as a means of earning a living.

The speaker points out that the Reformation—however spiritual its origins—also had political and economic consequences. Countries where the Reformation took root flourished. Think of the Netherlands, Germany, England, and later America. Where the Word could be heard freely, superstition disappeared, education flourished, and constitutional states arose that protected the citizen.

At the same time, fierce opposition arose. The Counter-Reformation, led by the Jesuits, aimed to restore Roman Catholic influence. Where possible, Protestant Bibles were banned, reformed preachers were persecuted, and the people were once again subjected to the old liturgy. In France, this led to the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre, in which thousands of Huguenots were slaughtered. In Spain, it led to the Inquisition. In the Netherlands, it led to the Eighty Years' War.

But the truth could not be killed. Every martyr was a seed. Every burning brought new fervor. Every Bible that was banned was secretly multiplied. The Spirit of God moved through Europe—not with violence, but with the Word.

And that was precisely the power of the Reformation: it did not rely on weapons, papal decrees, or earthly power. It relied on Scripture alone. And that Word proved itself.

Today, we see once again how societies collapse under the weight of lies, corruption, and immorality. And many ask themselves: What can we do? The Reformation provides an answer that still holds true today: return to the Word. Let the Word reign in your home, church, and government. Start with the children. Start with the family. Start with yourself.

The Return to Rome – How the Protestant Church Lost Its Foundations

Although the Reformation was a powerful rediscovery of biblical truth, the freedom it brought was gradually exchanged in later centuries for convenience, tradition, and human philosophy. The Protestant church began to forget Luther's core truths and returned—step by step—to the spiritual yoke of Rome. Not in outward appearance, but in theological spirit.

The speaker warns: humans naturally tend to want to serve God on certain conditions. And as soon as the Word is no longer the highest authority, churches fall back into old patterns: rituals, hierarchy, merit, religious achievements. Where Luther proclaimed, "The righteous shall live by faith," today we hear once again, "If you do this... then God may." That is not the gospel—that is a threat.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Protestant churches began to make more and more compromises. First in the doctrine of free will, then in abandoning the doctrine of election, and finally even in the authority of Scripture itself. Modern theologies preferred reason over revelation, and scientific doubt became more important than faith in God's Word. Man once again took center stage.

The speaker calls this "the second fall": not back to Rome's outward appearance, but to its spirit. Grace became conditional again, faith became a human decision, and salvation became dependent on something you do. This undermined the basis of sola gratia.

People said, "Believe in Jesus," but they meant, "Accept Jesus."

People said, "You are saved by faith," but they meant, "You are saved if you choose to be."

Grace became a contract again, not a gift.

The Reformed churches that once stood for truth became divided. Some became modernistic—denying miracles, glorifying man, and reinterpreting Scripture. Others outwardly held to old confessions but inwardly preached a gospel of choice and conditions. The Liberated, the Reformed, the Evangelicals—many became detached from the foundation.

And today? Today, the majority of churchgoers are once again under a doctrine that says, "God wants to save you, but you have to allow it." That sounds encouraging, but it is misleading. For it places the sovereign God under the will of man. The Bible says:

"No one seeks God, not even one." (Romans 3:11)

"You did not choose me, but I chose you." (John 15:16)

The Reformation was born out of this truth: that salvation comes entirely from God. No human being can bring himself to life. No dead soul chooses Christ of its own accord. It is grace
— or it is nothing.

The speaker reminds us that even Luther grew slowly in this understanding. His early statements still contained traces of the old way of thinking. But as he examined Scripture more deeply, man increasingly disappeared from the center—and Christ alone came to the throne.

And that is the lesson for us today: we cannot preserve reformation through walls, robes, or creeds. Only where the Word truly reigns does truth live. As soon as human reasoning, experience, or tradition take the place of the Word, we return to the slavery of religion.

The call of this section is therefore: do not be misled by fine words. Examine the message. Is it really grace? Or is there a condition, an action, a choice hidden that puts man back at the center? Because where the "gospel" begins with man, it always ends without God.

The New Tower of Babel – Ecumenism and the Blurring of Truth

In this seventh part, it becomes clear how the Protestant relapse did not end with a weak doctrine or a blurred gospel, but led to an organized attempt to bring all churches back together—not on the basis of truth, but on the basis of unity. The ecumenical movement was presented as a peaceful restoration of brotherhood,

but in reality it was a new Tower of Babel: a religious dream of unity in which God's Word was subordinated to human cooperation.

The speaker names it explicitly: the World Council of Churches. In this organization, founded in 1948, hundreds of Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, and other denominations came together to pursue global church unity. But instead of focusing on truth, the emphasis was placed on "dialogue," "diversity," and "respect for each other's traditions."

Those who held fast to biblical truth were seen as narrow-minded or fundamentalist.

Rome played this game of chess cleverly. While the Protestant churches became increasingly intermingled, the Roman Catholic Church slowly opened its arms. The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) suddenly referred to Protestants as "separated brethren" instead of heretics. Catholics were now allowed to attend Mass in their own language. And the pope declared that "elements of sanctification" could also be found outside the Church of Rome. It seemed mild — but it was calculated.

Rome's goal was and is clear: to restore universal authority. Not through war, but through embrace. Not through dictates, but through consensus. And many Protestants fell for it. Churches that once owed their existence to the Reformation now returned to Rome—symbolically, theologically, or literally.

The speaker cites the example of Lutheran churches in Germany and Scandinavia that signed joint declarations with the Vatican stating that there was no longer any "essential difference" between their doctrine and that of Rome on justification. But how can that be, when Rome still teaches that justification depends on sacraments, works, and obedience to the church?

The answer is: the truth has been sacrificed in order to preserve unity.

The ecumenical movement has one fundamental flaw: it confuses spiritual unity with human cooperation. True unity in the Bible is based on one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Not on one flag, one committee, or one council of churches. When truth is sacrificed for a false kind of unity, it is not the fruit of the Spirit—but of Babel.

Just as in Genesis 11, people built a tower to make a name for themselves, religious leaders today are building an ecumenical tower to increase their influence. But God confused their language back then — and He will also bring confusion to a system that abandons His Word.

The speaker emphasizes that God's people are not called to unity with world religion, but to separation:

“Come out of her, My people, that you may not share in her sins.” (Revelation 18:4)

This call is louder today than ever before. Because the deception is nicely packaged. No one calls it "indulgences" or "papal authority" anymore. Now it's called "working together," "building bridges," and "respecting others." But underneath all those nice words lies

the same foundation as in Luther's day: a human religion that does not honor God's Word, but marginalizes it.

That is why the lesson of this section is clear and sharp: true unity comes only through truth. And where truth is exchanged for tolerance, Christ is crucified again — this time in the church.

Come Out of Her, My People – The Eternal Call to Separate from the False System

In this final part of the second transcript, we hear the message that runs like a thread through the entire Reformation: separation from the false system is not a choice, but a command. Just

as Abraham was called out of Ur, Moses out of Egypt, Elijah out of Israel, and John out of the desert

— so today God calls His people to break away from the religious Babylon that holds the world in its grip.

The speaker reminds us that Luther himself gradually came to understand this call. Initially, he did not want to separate from Rome—he wanted to purify it. He hoped for repentance on the part of the pope, for insight on the part of the bishops, for reform from within. But the truth demanded his heart. And he discovered that you cannot be a servant of Christ and at the same time cling to a structure of lies.

The central Bible text of this section is:

“Come out of her, My people, so that you will not share in her sins, and so that you will not receive any of her plagues.” (Revelation 18:4)

This call is not only about the Roman Catholic Church, but about every religious system that suppresses the truth in favor of power, money, tradition, or human honor. Babylon is bigger than Rome alone. It is the totality of organized religion in which Christ is not truly King, and in which the Word of God does not reign.

Many say today, “I will stay in my church to change it from within.”

But history teaches us that this does not work. No prophet in the Bible was called to remain in Babylon. No apostle was called to reform Jerusalem. The call is always: leave, and proclaim the truth.

The speaker points to Jeremiah, who said to the people:

“Flee from the midst of Babylon, and let everyone save his life, lest you be destroyed in her iniquity.” (Jeremiah 51:6)

This is not a noncommittal suggestion—it is a command. For whoever remains in the system that God will judge will share in its judgment. Whoever does not separate himself from its sin will also receive its plagues.

Today, countless sincere believers are trapped in churches that falsify God’s Word, distort the gospel, and align themselves with worldly movements for unity and inclusion. They say, “But I love my church,” or, “My family is here.” But the question is not what you feel — the question is what God says.

And God says, “Come out of her, My people.”

That sometimes means loss. Friends. Family. Church ties. Music. Habits. But it means gain of inestimable value: freedom, truth, fellowship with Christ, and a clear conscience. For only when the Word is restored to its rightful place will true peace be found.

The speaker concludes with the reminder of Luther’s moment before the Diet of Worms. When he stood before emperors, cardinals, and bishops and was asked to recant his teachings, he replied:

“Unless I am convinced by Scripture and by clear reason—for I do not believe the pope or the councils alone, since they have often erred and contradicted themselves — then I am overcome by the scriptural witnesses I have cited. My conscience is bound to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to act against one's conscience is neither safe nor salutary. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen." That attitude is rare today. But it is necessary.

For judgment is approaching. Babylon will fall. And God's people must not be there when it happens.

Chapter 3

The Unmasking of Rome – Luther's First Exodus

As an introduction, I will read an article from a local newspaper in Arizona, from the religion page a few weeks ago. It is about Martin Luther, on the occasion of the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of his birth. The title reads: The sale of indulgences sparked a monk's rebellion. As you may understand, this is not about a whole group of monks, but about one man: Martin Luther.

While teaching at the University of Wittenberg, Luther gradually discovered his greatest theological insight between 1513 and 1517:

"The righteous shall live by faith."

Luther's opposition to the Roman Catholic Church was fueled in 1517, when Pope Leo X needed money to complete St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. He allowed the Archbishop of Mainz to sell indulgences in Saxony. The article then describes what indulgences are, but we have already covered that, so we will skip it.

Luther was eventually summoned to account for himself. Pope Leo X lost his patience and excommunicated Luther in October 1520. In April 1521, he was summoned to the Diet of Worms. Emperor Charles V and the papal envoys demanded that Luther recant his writings. After a night of reflection, Luther gave his famous reply:

"Since your majesty and noble lords desire a simple statement, I will answer without preamble. Unless I am convinced by Scripture and clear reason—for I do not believe in the authority of popes and councils, since they have contradicted each other—my conscience is bound to God's Word. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against one's conscience is neither just nor safe.

Here I stand. God help me. Amen."

At that moment, Luther stood before a religious power that ruled all of Europe: from England to the Ottoman Empire, from Spain to Scandinavia. He stood there alone. He knew that his choice could mean death—but he chose to obey God's Word, not the pope.

Note that he did not say, "I do not recant what Luther believes," but rather,

"I do not recant what I believe to be the Word of God."

And so, without fully realizing it, this man set in motion a storm that would shake the entire Catholic world. God had apparently prepared Europe for a new approach to faith—through the Word of God itself, and no longer through the intervention of priests.

National Geographic mentions that when Luther sent his 95 theses to Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz, he was stirring up a hornet's nest. He did not know that behind the sale of indulgences lay a huge financial scandal. He thought he could reform the church theologically, not destroy it. He still saw himself as a Catholic priest.

But Albrecht, who was heavily in debt to the Fugger bankers in Augsburg, had borrowed money to have himself appointed archbishop. This was forbidden under canon law. He had to pay huge fines to Rome. Pope Leo X gave permission to sell indulgences, with half of the proceeds going to the construction of the basilica — and the other half to the bankers to pay off Albrecht's debts.

Albrecht sent Luther's theses to Rome with a request to have him condemned. And so the machinery of Rome began to turn.

Behind the façade of the church stood financiers.

These bankers lent money to individuals who, in exchange, could buy a bishop's seat — literally buy it. They then received the tithes and income from the ecclesiastical territory for which they paid. Thus, the clergy was not appointed by God, but by debt and interest.

Journalist George W. Cornell writes about the worldly roots of the Reformation. He says:

“When Luther began his protest—at a time when salvation was seen as something that could be earned through good works and monetary payments—he struck not only at the customs but also at the entire financial power system of the church.”

The reformers, without immediately realizing it, threatened the source of power and wealth of the clergy. What began as a call for theological purification became a struggle against a centuries-old system of oppression and exploitation.

A recent joint report by Lutherans and Catholics even acknowledges this:

“The system of indulgences and masses was in the hands of an often corrupt ecclesiastical apparatus. Bishops from wealthy noble families bought their positions for large sums of money. Church revenues were used for luxurious lifestyles, palaces, public buildings, wars—and, of course, to repay loans to bankers.”

And Luther didn't know all that at the beginning. He simply began preaching what he read in God's Word. But when he began preaching the truth, the whole system slowly collapsed.

I conclude this section with an important comment from Pastor Sheldon Emry:

“Today, there is only one group of preachers who denounce both the theological error and the financial exploitation of Christianity: the Kingdom or Israel identity Christianity. No other church dares to touch either.”

The shadow of Mammon over the altar

At first, Luther did not know that behind the pope and the archbishops stood the moneylenders who held the real power. It was only years later that he discovered how the papal system was not only theologically corrupt, but also financially entangled in a web of debt and interest. And it was precisely this web that was the real driving force behind the sale of indulgences.

The archbishop had borrowed money from the Fugger bankers to buy his office, and indulgences were the means of recouping that money. Half went to Rome, the other half to the money lenders. Meanwhile, the people were lied to, told that it was for the salvation of their souls—that they could be saved from purgatory by throwing a coin into a box.

It was even said that the prayer of a poor lay person, combined with a gift, would be more powerful than the prayer of a clergyman without a gift. People gave their last money to free loved ones from a fictitious limbo, while the church and its creditors enriched themselves.

In another article published in U.S. Catholic, one of their editors says:

“Purgatory—the place of purgatory—is a doctrine that is still taught, even though we find it nowhere in Scripture.”

A Catholic priest stated in the same magazine:

“Indulgences, prayers, and charity can help the dead out of purgatory.”

Some even taught that the dead themselves could intercede with God on behalf of the living. A female saint claimed that she received more answers to her prayers through the souls in purgatory than through the saints in heaven. Another wrote:

“The souls in purgatory are like messengers who bring our prayers to God. The more you help them, the more they help you.”

But in reality, there is only one Mediator between God and man: Jesus Christ. Scripture does not teach us that we receive help from the dead. On the contrary, anyone who turns to the dead is condemned by the law as an idolater.

Yet this false teaching is still alive and well, even within the so-called renewed Catholic teaching. Its foundations remain intact. The rich can buy indulgences for their deceased family members, while the poor must hope for mercy.

Why do Protestant churches no longer preach this? Why do they not say loud and clear that purgatory is a lie, that indulgences are an abuse of simple people, that the structure of the Roman Church is built on financial slavery?

Because they have become complicit. Modern churches preach only what is politically correct—what the masses accept. They are afraid to turn against the system because they themselves are part of the system. They receive subsidies, tax exemptions, respect from the world—but their conscience is silent.

And so history turns around. Instead of the Reformation continuing, the protest creeps back into the papal bed. Today, there are Protestant leaders who say, “The Reformation is over.” Some even return to Rome, or say that Rome has changed.

But the system has not changed — only the mask has been changed. And the indulgence may now be “muted,” but its spirit lives on: paying for souls, paying for prayers, paying for power. It is the spirit of Mammon that has entered the temple — once again.

And just as Jesus once overturned the tables of the money changers, so He will once again cleanse His house. But this time it will not be with a whip—it will be with fire.

The chain of fear and the power of Scripture

Today, most of humanity is still unaware of these hidden forces, just as Luther was at first. But even now, behind ecclesiastical façades and seemingly sacred traditions, a structure of exploitation, control, and financial slavery continues to exist.

And once again—just as then—many do not ask why the churches remain silent about what is really going on. Why do pastors today no longer call for resistance against the system that robs people of their farms, homes, businesses, savings, and freedom? Why do they remain silent about the true nature of this economic Babylon?

The answer is simple: because they are afraid. Afraid of losing income. Afraid of losing their members. Afraid of going against the tide. And above all: afraid of the truth.

But Luther was not afraid. When he stood up to the Roman Catholic Church with God's Word in his hand, he stood there as a man who knew that truth was stronger than the sword. He knew that the gospel could not be sold to the highest bidder. He knew that you don't need priests to get to God—only faith, formed by the Word.

In a letter to Pope Leo X, even before his excommunication, Luther wrote:

“I am ready to obey you as pope, and even the devil himself, if I am convinced that he speaks from God’s Word. But I will obey no one who twists Scripture.”

This was not a rebellious rebel. This was a man who let his conscience speak, not his pride. And that conscience was shaped by Bible verses he did not know in his youth, but which he only read when he became a monk and gained access to the Word of God — a privilege that ordinary people did not have. The Bible was forbidden property.

Those who read God's Word without papal permission in those days were condemned to be burned at the stake. In England alone, dozens of people were burned alive for translating, reading, or distributing the Bible.

But despite the threat of death, despite the hatred of religious leaders, despite the hatred of the state, Luther stood up with the Bible in his hand—and he brought the system to its knees.

Many today own a Bible, but they don't read it. They have it in their homes, but not in their hearts. And because they don't know it, they fall into the same traps of the past: human tradition, religion without truth, churches without power.

The pope may no longer have swords, but he still has power—power over the consciences of millions who have never learned to obey God directly.

And so the fire of the Reformation has been extinguished in the ashes of oblivion. Luther's words have become slogans. His struggle has become a holiday. His call for conversion has become a tourist attraction.

But for those who still want to stand today as Luther stood—on the Word alone—the same calling still applies:

“My conscience is bound to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything.”

The deadly power of a deceitful system

The report of the Catholic and Lutheran commission, which was jointly prepared on the occasion of the commemoration of Luther's birth, admits that the system of indulgences and masses in the sixteenth century was administered by a "often corrupt hierarchy." But that does not undo the evil. For no matter how often one admits that there were abuses, as long as the system is maintained, nothing will change.

The popes, cardinals, and bishops who bought their offices with borrowed money lived like kings. They used the tithes of the faithful to build palaces, wage wars, and enrich their families. But that money did not come easily—it was taken from the poor, from the ignorant, from those who believed that their gifts would save souls from purgatory.

The people were deliberately kept in fear. They were taught that without the priest they had no access to God, that the dead were suffering in purgatory and begging for help, and that only money, masses, and indulgences could redeem them. And so people gave their last coin.

A famous indulgence preacher, Johann Tetzel, stood in markets in Germany and shouted:

"As soon as the money clinks in the box, the soul jumps out of purgatory!"

This was not superstition on the part of the people. It was the official doctrine of the church. And behind that doctrine was a well-thought-out revenue model. Those who sold indulgences earned commissions. Those who sold more indulgences were promoted. And those who criticized—like Luther—were excommunicated or worse.

The system not only destroyed people's spiritual lives, it also robbed them of their possessions, their joy, and their trust in God's mercy. For the gospel was replaced by commerce.

And if that was the case then, why should it be any different now? Has Rome recanted its teachings? No. It has adapted its language, softened its tone, modernized its appearance. But the core remains: obedience to the church above obedience to God.

Why would priests still claim to be able to forgive sins? Why is Mary still invoked as a mediator? Why are candles sold for the dead, Masses said for a fee, and statues kissed as holy?

Because the system has never changed. It has merely adapted. And just as in Luther's day, the Word of God stands in direct opposition to it.

It is therefore not surprising that Rome banned the Bible for centuries. They feared that if people actually read what was in it, they would discover that the entire papal structure is based on lies. That they would learn:

“There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” 1 Timothy 2:5

“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.” Exodus 20:4–5 “The righteous will live by faith.” Romans 1:17

And that is precisely why the Reformation did not begin with a sword, but with a hammer—with which Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door. He did not call the people to war, but to repentance. Not to violence, but to reading.

The silent church and the repetition of sin

Many believe that the Roman Catholic Church has lost its power since the Reformation. But in reality, it is more powerful today than ever before. Not through fire and sword as in the Middle Ages, but through influence, diplomacy, and embracing its former enemies.

The pope is now honored by Protestant leaders, invited to global conferences, and applauded by politicians and religious movements of every stripe. Catholic doctrines are being embraced once again, even by those who once professed “sola Scriptura” — Scripture alone — as their foundation. The ecumenical movement is nothing less than a return to Rome, packaged in words of unity and love.

But those who know God's Word know that unity without truth is not a blessing, but a trap. Scripture warns of a great apostasy, in which many will no longer endure sound doctrine and will turn their ears away from it.

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, they will heap up for themselves teachers, having it all in their own desires.” 2 Timothy 4:3

The churches today—even many Protestant ones—have become institutions that prefer to remain silent rather than confront the spirit of this world. They preach what is pleasant to the ear, not what is necessary for the soul.

They would no longer dare to repeat Luther's words:

“Here I stand, I can do no other.”

For they no longer stand. They bow. They nod. They conform. They abandon the truth to win the favor of men. They speak of mercy, but are silent about justice. They proclaim love, but ignore obedience.

And while millions are once again caught in the web of tradition, of rituals without power, of religion without rebirth, there are only a few who dare to stand up. As in the days of Elijah, when he thought he was the only one left—but God had seven thousand who had not bowed their knees to Baal.

So today there are men and women who refuse to bow to Rome, to Mammon, to religious hypocrisy. They stand on the foundation of the prophets, of the apostles, of Christ Himself.

But they are rare. And often they are despised, mocked, ignored — even by their own brothers. For the truth does not make one popular, but free. And those who are free belong nowhere — except to God.

The truth burned — the Bible in chains

In Luther's day, most people did not own a Bible. Not only because books were scarce and expensive, but mainly because Rome forbade anyone to read the Scriptures without the permission of the church. Possessing the Bible in the vernacular could lead to arrest, torture, or even burning at the stake.

The church claimed that the common people could not understand Scripture without its interpretation. In this way, it held the Word of God captive — literally chained in monasteries, or symbolically chained in a language no one spoke: Latin.

John Hus, who protested against these abuses a hundred years before Luther, was burned alive. His crime? He preached that Christ alone is the head of the church and that the Bible is the highest authority. William Tyndale, who translated the Bible into English, had to flee, was betrayed, strangled, and burned—because he gave the people access to God's Word.

These were not heretics. These were people who believed that Jesus Christ is the only Mediator, that salvation is by grace, and that the Word of God is understandable to every person who is led by the Spirit.

Rome knew that if the people read what was really in the Bible, its authority would crumble. For Scripture teaches no indulgences. No purgatory. No papal primacy. No veneration of Mary. No infallibility of councils. No infant baptism for salvation. No sacrificial offering that takes away sins.

What Scripture does teach is that the Son of God, once sacrificed, has brought about eternal reconciliation. And that every person may come to Him without the intervention of a priest, pope, or saint.

“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Hebrews 4:16

Luther translated the Bible into German and gave it to the people. That was revolutionary. For whoever reads the Word will no longer bow to human traditions. Whoever believes the Word will rise up—just like him.

And yet, today, millions of people own a Bible — in their own language — but do not read it. They allow themselves to be taught by people instead of by the Word. They believe what preachers say, what churches teach, what popular authors proclaim, but they do not test it against Scripture.

“They examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.” Acts 17:11

The chains are gone, but slavery remains. And the only path to freedom is still the same: open the Word of God, read it, believe it—and obey it.

The old error in a new guise

Modern churches are proud of their origins in the Reformation, but in practice many have returned to the old error. They bear different names, use different forms, but the spirit of the papal system lives on — in doctrine, in practice, in authority, and in structure.

How often do we hear sermons today in which believers are taught that they are dependent on human mediation? That they must listen to "the anointed one," that they must obey the church hierarchy? How often are prayers, miracles, forgiveness, and blessings linked to money, sowing, sacrificing, and giving?

Ancient Rome lives on in the new Babylon.

The same control over conscience, the same fear of "going against God," the same teaching that the clergy is above the laity. Only now without Latin and incense, but with microphones and LED screens.

And once again, the Bible is not the foundation. It is used, quoted, embellished, but not obeyed.

Luther's call — back to the Word alone — has been replaced by:

"What does the pastor say?" "What
does our movement
teach?"

"What does the book of that well-known preacher say?"

But who today dares to say:

"Unless I am convinced by Scripture and common sense... my conscience is bound to God's Word."

Most pastors would see such a statement as rebellion. Because anyone who follows the Word above the denomination poses a threat to the system. And systems do not tolerate threats.

That is why true believers today are once again shunned, slandered, and ignored. Not because they preach lies, but because they do not soften the truth. Not because they believe wrongly, but because they refuse to bow down.

The true church has always stood outside the gate, just as Christ Himself was crucified outside the gate of Jerusalem. Those who follow Him must be prepared to bear that humiliation as well.

And that is what the Reformation really was: not a triumphal procession, but a way of the cross. Not a revolution of the masses, but a testimony of a few. Not an embrace of the people, but rejection by the powers that be.

And yet: it was enough. One man, one Word, one God — that was enough to shake the foundations.

The judgment on Rome — and the calling of today

In Revelation 18, we read how God Himself speaks to His people, who are still trapped in the system of Babylon — the religious, political, and economic empire that has turned against Him. And what does He say?

“Come out of her, My people, so that you will not share in her sins, and so that you will not receive any of her plagues.” Revelation 18:4

This call applies not only to the Rome of old, but also to all systems today that are built on idolatry, deception, commercialism, and spiritual harlotry. It is a command to every child of God: come out. Separate yourselves. Be holy.

For the judgment on these powers has already begun. Babylon has fallen—not in a political sense, but in a moral and spiritual sense. Her lies are being exposed, her works are being burned, her power is being undermined. God will cast her down with force, like a millstone into the sea.

“So Babylon, the great city, will be thrown down with violence, and will not be found anymore.” Revelation 18:21

The Reformation was the beginning of that exodus. It was a prophetic moment when God's people began to awaken and break free from the chains of Rome. But the work is not yet complete. For many have returned, others have remained entangled in human systems, and only a few have truly continued on the path of obedience to the Word.

And yet — the call still sounds. The voice of the Good Shepherd still says, “Follow Me.”

Not: follow Luther. Not: follow Calvin. Not: follow the church. But: follow Me — Jesus Christ, the living Word of God.

Today it is time once again to stand. Not with stones, not with violence, not with anger — but with conviction, with truth, with holiness. As Luther stood. As the prophets stood. As the apostles stood.

For God does not seek crowds. He seeks faithfulness. Not popular voices. He seeks obedience. Not new teachings. He seeks people who love the old, eternal Word — and hold fast to it, whatever the cost.

As it was in the beginning, so shall it be at the end:

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives even unto death.” Revelation 12:11

May that also be said of us.

The temptation of compromise – Luther's struggle against ecclesiastical error

The sale of indulgences and Martin Luther. This is part four.

As we continue this study on the sale of indulgences and Martin Luther, I would like to delve a little deeper into an important aspect of his struggle: compromise. For although we often see Luther as the unshakeable reformer who declared, "Here I stand," we must realize that he, like every other human being, was confronted with temptations to give in and back down.

The power of the Catholic Church extended across the entire continent. No king, prince, or citizen could escape it without consequences. And then there stood a single man—a monk, a priest—who spoke out against the entire structure. That required more than just faith. It required courage of conscience, because compromise was always lurking.

What was the core of Luther's resistance? Not just that indulgences were being sold, but that the church was setting itself up as an intermediary between God and man, contrary to Scripture. Luther stated: "My conscience is bound to the Word of God." That was not a frivolous statement.

In doing so, he rejected the authority of popes and councils as infallible.

He knew that such statements could cost him his life. He stood face to face with emperors, cardinals, and theologians who demanded that he recant. But he did not. Why? Because he refused to give in to fear or to the appearance of peace that a compromise would bring.

In our time, compromises often seem attractive: "If we can find something in the middle, then everyone will be satisfied." But spiritually speaking, that is not always right. Luther could not afford to deny his conscience "for the sake of peace." He knew that truth does not tolerate negotiation.

And if we look at the context of his time: Europe was ruled by a religious system that controlled not only the soul but also the body. Church offices were bought with money from financiers. The sale of indulgences financed cathedrals and enriched bishops. And all that money came from simple people, out of fear of a false doctrine about purgatory.

But Luther had read the Bible. And he knew that forgiveness is not a commodity. There is only one Mediator between God and man: Jesus Christ. Not Mary. Not a priest. And certainly not a piece of paper with the Pope's seal on it.

What is so powerful about Luther's actions is that he did not start out as a revolutionary. He was an honest seeker. He initially hoped that the church would reform itself. Only when he saw that this was impossible did he break away radically. And it is precisely this development, this struggle, that makes his position so credible.

Today, we have the Bible in abundance. We can read, compare, and test. And yet there are still systems that try to stand between God and man. The call for

compromise still rings out. "Don't say anything too harsh." "Be tolerant." But truth without sharpness is weak. And a conscience that bows to human approval is no longer a conscience.

That is why we look back to Luther, not as a saint, but as a man who stood his ground—precisely because he knew the pressure. And perhaps, just perhaps, his greatest legacy is not his theses, but his refusal to bow down when the truth was at stake.

We continue on this path, rooted in Scripture and conscience, and stand alongside this man who fought not only against indulgences, but against the entire system of deception that accompanied them.

The stranglehold of Rome – money, fear, and obedience

The Catholic Church in Luther's time was not just a religious institution — it was a world power. It owned land, armies, fortunes, and had direct influence over kings and emperors. Its doctrines were not just theological beliefs, but laws enforced by violence. And at the heart of it all was the economy of fear: purgatory.

Purgatory was a masterstroke. The doctrine that you had to atone after death—sometimes for thousands of years—before you could go to heaven gave the church control over life and death. It made people prisoners of their own sins, and the only escape was through indulgences, masses, prayers, and supplications—all, of course, under the control of the church.

It was a system designed to keep people in slavery. After all, who would dare to stand up against a church that claimed to be able to prolong or shorten your salvation? Who would refuse to pay if they believed that their mother or child was suffering in hell at that very moment?

Indulgences were therefore not a side issue. They were the means by which the people were exploited. And at the same time, they were the means by which the church financed its palaces, works of art, and wars. A ruthless financial system was hidden behind the motives of "salvation."

And then Luther came along. He pierced right through the façade. Not because he was a rebel, but because he knew what Scripture really taught: that Christ alone grants forgiveness, and that forgiveness cannot be bought.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Ephesians 2:8–9

The doctrine of purgatory had no basis in Scripture. Nowhere is it taught that there is an intermediate state in which the dead suffer until their living relatives have paid enough. The entire structure was based on tradition, myth, and—let's be honest—greed.

But that lie was powerful. For it was not just an idea, it was a daily reality. People lived in fear. They trusted their priests more than Scripture,

because they often couldn't read it. And even if they had access to a Bible, they were pressured to accept the church's interpretation over the Word itself.

That's why indulgences were so effective. They gave people the idea that they could do something — even if it was just paying — to improve the eternal fate of their loved ones.

And so they sacrificed not only money, but hope, trust, faith. They gave everything they had to a system that deceived them.

Luther saw that. And he dared to say:

“This is not from God.”

He pointed to Scripture. He called for repentance. And he put his finger on the sore spot: the church had not merely erred—it had willfully abused its power.

In his 95 theses, he wrote, among other things:

“Christians should be taught that he who helps a poor man or lends to a needy man is better than he who buys indulgences.”

“True penance does not end with outward acts of penance, but lasts a lifetime.”

“The true treasure of the church is the most holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God.”

And with those words began a struggle that would echo for centuries. Not only against indulgences, but against every system that imprisons people—and thereby hides the truth of Christ.

The hammer on the church door — the beginning of a spiritual earthquake

The date was October 31, 1517. The place: Wittenberg, Germany. Martin Luther nailed 95 theses to the door of the castle chapel. Not with the intention of starting a revolution, but as an invitation to academic debate. Yet that hammer blow was the start of a movement that would change the world.

Luther had no armies. No money. No papal blessing. Only the Word of God, a deeply moved conscience, and the conviction that the truth was worth suffering for — even dying for.

The church door served as the university's bulletin board. And the theses were written in Latin — intended for theologians and scholars. But the content was so powerful, so sharp, and so relevant to the common people that they were translated and distributed at breakneck speed.

The printing press, recently developed by Gutenberg, became a tool of truth. Within weeks, the theses were known throughout Germany. Within months, throughout Europe. And within a few years, there was no turning back.

What made these theses so explosive?

It was not just that Luther opposed a theological detail. He struck at the heart of the Roman Catholic business model. He argued that forgiveness could not be sold. That indulgences did not liberate people, but deceived them. And that true conversion did not consist of payment, but of inner change and faith in Christ.

And he backed it all up with Scripture.

“The righteous shall live by faith.” Romans 1:17

This text became the anchor of the Reformation. Luther had read it in Paul's letter to the Romans—a letter that the church had concealed for centuries under layers of tradition, canon law, and ecclesiastical interpretation.

But once read, light came. And that light revealed how dark the system really was.

Luther's theses declared that the pope had no power over purgatory. That no clergyman could grant forgiveness outside of Christ. And that the true treasure of the church was not found in relics, buildings, or power, but in the Gospel of grace.

These statements were not attacks on people, but on lies. They were not a call to hatred, but to truth. And yet Luther was considered more dangerous than any enemy from outside.

For a man with truth is more dangerous than an army with swords.

And what began as an intellectual protest grew into a spiritual revival. Thousands began to read the Scriptures. Many left the Catholic Church. New congregations sprang up, built on sola scriptura, sola fide, sola gratia—Scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone.

And despite exile, threats, and banishment, Luther stood firm. For he knew: if God is for us, who can be against us?

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?” Psalm 27:1

The lines are drawn — Rome strikes back

When the Roman Catholic Church realized that Luther's message was spreading like wildfire, the counterattack began. What started as silence and contempt quickly turned into threats and open hostility. For the pope, who saw himself as the head of the church on earth, could not allow this challenger to go unchallenged.

In June 1520, Pope Leo X issued the bull *Exsurge Domine* — a formal church document accusing Luther of heresy. It demanded that he recant his statements within sixty days, on pain of excommunication.

The tone of the bull was clear: the pope called Luther "a wild boar rampaging through the Lord's vineyard." The church felt threatened—not by violence, but by the truth.

Luther's response? He took the bull, along with other church law books, and burned them publicly at the stake. In doing so, he made his break with Rome irreversible. Not out of pride, but because he knew that the pope did not speak for Christ, but against the Gospel.

“He who is not with Me is against Me.” Matthew 12:30

The pope reacted furiously. In January 1521, Luther was officially excommunicated. But it did not end there. Emperor Charles V—ruler of the Holy Roman Empire—convened an imperial diet in Worms. There, Luther had to answer to both secular and spiritual authorities.

It was there, before the most powerful men of his time, that Luther spoke the words that went down in history:

"Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by clear reason—for I do not trust the pope or the councils, since they have often erred and contradicted themselves—I am bound by the Scriptures I have cited. My conscience is bound to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to act against one's conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen."

These words were not rebellion, but obedience. Not arrogance, but humble determination. Luther did not stand for himself—he stood for the Word.

And the reaction of those in power? Luther was declared an outlaw. That meant that anyone could kill him with impunity. His life was in immediate danger.

But God provided. The Saxon Elector Frederick the Wise had Luther kidnapped and taken to Wartburg Castle, where he could stay safely under the name "Junker Jörg."

There, in isolation, Luther began one of his greatest deeds: translating the New Testament into German. An act that made the Word of God available to millions of ordinary people—without the intervention of Rome.

What the enemy intended for destruction, God used for building up. What was meant to stifle became a means of spreading the Word.

Luther's resistance was not a personal crusade. It was the cry of a conscience that would not be enslaved by human authority when it conflicted with God's Word.

The Word set free — the Bible in the vernacular

In the solitude of the Wartburg, Martin Luther began a work that was as revolutionary as it was dangerous: the translation of the New Testament into German. Until then

At that time, the Bible was written in Latin, a language understood only by the clergy. Ordinary people depended on what priests told them—and what they did not tell them remained hidden.

For centuries, Rome had kept the Scriptures in chains. Literally — because in many churches, the Bible was chained to the lectern. But also spiritually — because people had been led to believe that the Scriptures were too difficult, too holy, too dangerous for ordinary people.

Luther thought differently.

He did not translate the Bible into academic German, but into the lively vernacular. He said, "One must hear the mother in the house, the children in the street, and the common man in the marketplace speak—and that is how Scripture should sound."

This was a radical act. For the translation gave people something that had been denied them for centuries: direct access to God's Word. No more intermediaries. No more ecclesiastical filters. Only the voice of God, understandable, clear, and alive.

“The Word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, to do it.” Deuteronomy 30:14

The consequences were incalculable. People everywhere began to read for themselves. They discovered that much of what they had been taught—about indulgences, purgatory, the priesthood, Mary, and the worship of images—was not in the Bible. Many were converted, others left the Church of Rome, and some began to teach, preach, and reform on their own.

Luther's translation of the New Testament was printed in 1522, and later the entire Old Testament followed. It became the basis for the unity of the German language, but more importantly, it became the sword that separated truth from falsehood.

However, this was not without danger. Translating the Bible was prohibited in many countries. In England, William Tyndale had begun the same work and was arrested, strangled, and burned for it. In other parts of Europe, possession of a Bible in the vernacular was considered heresy.

For those who know the Word are more difficult to deceive. Those who read the truth are less guided by tradition. And that made the Word a threat to any system built on lies and control.

Luther's work was therefore more than translation—it was liberation.

Not with swords, but with words. Not with violence, but with grace and truth. For the power of the Reformation lay not in protest alone, but in returning to Scripture as the highest authority.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105

The spirit of reform—not an end point, but a beginning

The Reformation was not a finished work in Luther's day — it was a starting point. It was a break with Rome, yes, but also a call to continually return to Scripture, to obedience, and to the living truth of God. For every generation faces the same choice: shall we follow the Word, or tradition?

Luther himself realized that he could not completely eradicate all the errors of his time. Some customs remained, sometimes out of pragmatism, sometimes out of fear of chaos. But he had set in motion a spiritual dynamic that could not be stopped.

And yet—in the decades that followed—we saw a renewed institutionalization of faith. New churches arose, with new rules, new structures, new doctrines. What began as a movement of the Spirit, in many cases became a system of men once again.

So the struggle was not over. Because every reform that stops with a person or at a moment in history becomes stagnant. It changes from living water into a stagnant swamp.

That is why Luther called for continuous reformation:

Ecclesia semper reformanda est — the church must always be reformed.

Not through violence. Not through political power. But by returning to Scripture. By opening the Bible and asking, “What does the Lord say?” — not, “What have we been taught?” or “What does the majority do?”

“Examine everything; hold on to what is good.” 1 Thessalonians 5:21

Luther's true legacy is therefore not a church, a movement, or a doctrine. It is the spirit of conscience that bows before the Word of God alone. It is the boldness to stand up for what is true, against all odds.

But what is the situation today?

Today we live in a time of information overload. The Bible is available everywhere — in print, digitally, spoken, and explained. And yet, the authority of Scripture is rare. Many preachers proclaim opinions, emotions, or marketing strategies, but few dare to say, "Thus says the Lord."

Many churches build on growth, relevance, and experience—but no longer on the unshakable rock of the Word. And so it is that the Reformation still exists in name, but is fading in spirit.

That is why Luther's call is more relevant today than ever: return to the Word. To grace without a price tag. To faith without intermediaries. To Christ without ecclesiastical intervention.

Let us pray that God will once again raise up men and women with a purified conscience, with an open Bible, and with an unshakeable conviction: “I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand. God help me.”

The hidden struggle—reform begins in the heart

Amidst all of Luther's public acts—his theses, his translations, his resistance — there was a struggle that was much less visible: the inner struggle. For every true reform begins not with pamphlets or protests, but with repentance in the heart. Not with criticism of the church, but with self-examination before God.

Luther himself struggled intensely with sin and guilt. Before his breakthrough in faith, he spent hours in the confessional. He fasted, prayed, subjected himself to asceticism—all to be sure that God was merciful to him.

But peace eluded him. Until he read in Scripture that justification does not come through works, but through faith:

“The righteous shall live by faith.” Romans 1:17

That moment—when the light of God's grace broke through in his heart—was the real beginning of the Reformation. For only when he himself was freed from the burden of religious effort could he show others the way to that same freedom.

There is a profound lesson here: we can fight the system from the outside, but if our hearts are not renewed, we will simply build a new system that is just as dead as the previous one.

True reform is not a matter of winning an argument, but of bowing to God's Word in your inner room. It is bending your knees before you raise your voice. It is learning to whisper to God before you learn to preach to people.

And that is why the Reformation calls us today not first to action, but to repentance. To let go of traditions, opinions, expectations—and to become still under the Scriptures.

“Thus says the LORD: ‘Stand in the ways where the old paths are, and know, and ask for the ancient way, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.’” Jeremiah 6:16

Those old paths are not dusty or outdated. They are tried and tested. They lead to life. They are sometimes narrow, unpopular, and require self-denial. But they bring us back to the simplicity of the Gospel.

Because ultimately, it is not about Luther, 1517, or church history. It is about Christ. About the crucified and risen Savior, who gave Himself for a people who could not save themselves. And who asks not for tradition, but for faith. Not for show, but for surrender. So the question remains: has our reformation begun in our hearts? Are we reformed—or merely reforming?

A legacy for the future – the battle is not yet over

Martin Luther died in 1546. His voice has fallen silent, his body has turned to dust, but his words live on. Not because he was a great man, but because he pointed to a great God. Not because he brought a new doctrine, but because he returned to the old, eternal Word.

And yet—how many today honor Luther's name but reject his spirit? How many churches celebrate the "Reformation" but live in compromise, convenience, and human tradition? How often has sola scriptura become merely a slogan, without truly determining our thinking, speaking, and acting?

The battle Luther began is not over. For the enemy has disguised himself once again. No longer with a golden miter and Latin Mass, but with soft words, modern forms, and a message of self-affirmation.

There is a new indulgence: the gospel of prosperity. There is a new papacy: the voice of popular preachers. There is a new purgatory: the endless cycle of religious activity without true conversion.

That is why the call of the Reformation is as urgent today as it was then:

“Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” Revelation 18:4

The voice of God is still calling. Not to the masses, but to the remnant. Not to the powerful, but to the faithful. Not to compromise, but to truth.

The Reformation was never intended as a final destination, but as the starting point of a lifelong journey in obedience.

As long as the church still fears people above God, there must be reformation. As long as preachers seek the approval of people above the authority of Scripture, there must be reformation. As long as Christians are satisfied with half-truths and half-obedience, there must be reformation.

And that reformation begins again—with you, with me, with everyone who dares to say, "My conscience is bound to the Word of God. I cannot and will not do otherwise."

For only then will the light break through again. Only then will truth ring out once more. Only then will the Name of Christ be glorified above all names.

So let us not merely remember Luther's legacy, but revive it. Let us not honor it with words, but follow it with deeds. Let us not preserve it in books, but carry it out in the world.

"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." 1 Corinthians 15:58

Chapter 5

The flow of money behind indulgences

We continue our study on the sale of indulgences and Martin Luther. This message is based on the truth of God's Word and the facts of history. We begin today with a brief recap of something we read earlier, namely an article in the newspaper that appeared on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's birth. The article was entitled: "Sale of indulgences led monk to revolt."

And as you might have guessed, it wasn't a whole group of monks who rebelled, but one man — Martin Luther. The article also stated that while teaching at the University of Wittenberg between 1513 and 1517, Luther gradually came to his greatest theological discovery: "The righteous shall live by faith."

His opposition to the Roman Catholic Church was fueled when Pope Leo X, who urgently needed money to complete the construction of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, gave the archbishop of Mainz permission to sell indulgences in Saxony. These indulgences would supposedly forgive sins — in exchange for money.

We then read that Pope Leo X lost patience with Luther in 1520 and excommunicated him. A year later, in April 1521, Luther was summoned to the Diet of Worms. There he stood before Emperor Charles V, who demanded that he recant his writings. But Luther responded with one of the most famous statements in German history:

"Unless I am convinced by the Scriptures and by clear reason—for I neither trust the pope nor the councils, since they contradict each other—my conscience is bound to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to act against one's conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. God help me. Amen."

And you have to imagine what an act of faith that was. Luther stood there alone against a religious system that ruled all of Europe—from England to the Dardanelles, from Spain to Scandinavia. The church had absolute power. And yet this monk stood there and refused to submit to their commands.

Why? Because his conscience was bound to the Word of God. Not to what Luther personally believed — no — he did not want to recant anything he had come to know as truth based on the Bible. And that distinction is crucial.

After these words of resistance, the entire Catholic world came down on him. But at the same time, without Luther realizing it, a huge popular movement began to form. It seems that God had prepared the heart of Europe to receive the truth of His Word, instead of just listening to the teachings of priests.

At first, Luther believed he could reform the church. He did not consider himself a revolutionary. He even saw himself as a loyal Catholic monk who wanted to correct abuses in the church based on the Bible.

But what he did not know—and what only came to light later—was that very different forces were at work behind the scenes. The papal banks played a key role in this. Take, for example, the Fugger bankers from Augsburg. These bankers had lent enormous sums of money to Albrecht of Mainz so that he — despite his young age and lack of ecclesiastical experience — could obtain three ecclesiastical offices. This was not officially allowed, so he had to pay heavy fines to the pope. And how did he pay off that debt? That's right — by selling indulgences, the proceeds of which went partly to Rome and partly to the bankers.

The position of archbishop was thus literally bought with borrowed money. And once someone had such a position, he could collect all the tithes (church taxes) from his diocese — which was used to repay the loan. So who was really behind the system of selling indulgences? Not only priests, not only the pope, but also the financiers — the moneylenders — who bought and controlled church positions in this way.

At first, Luther was unaware of this corrupt financial underclass. He thought it was a matter of theological error, but it was more than that: it was a system of financial exploitation, of slavery through debt and interest.

We read later that even secular writers, such as George W. Cornell, acknowledge that the reformers, even if it was not their intention, undermined the economic foundation of the Roman Catholic system. The Reformation affected not only the faith, but also the church's wallet.

And that is precisely what made it so explosive.

The banks of Rome and the price of forgiveness

The Roman Catholic system as it functioned in Martin Luther's day was not merely a religious structure — it was a financial machine, carefully constructed around debt, interest, and payment for salvation. It was a system in which even spiritual offices were acquired through loans, with spiritual power effectively being bought with capital — often borrowed from the powerful banking families of Europe.

We mentioned earlier the Fuggers of Augsburg — a banking family with enormous influence. They lent large sums of money to church leaders, including Albrecht of Brandenburg, so that he could obtain three ecclesiastical offices at the same time, something that was strictly forbidden under canon law. But with enough money, everything was for sale — even souls. The pope could grant dispensation, for a fee, and turned a blind eye.

That is precisely the crux of the matter. Those bank loans had to be repaid. But with what? The sale of indulgences became the means to that end.

The deal between Albrecht and Pope Leo X was simple: half of the proceeds from the sale of indulgences went to Rome, the other half to the Fuggers to repay the loan. Preaching forgiveness thus became a commercial project, intended to pay off debts incurred to buy power.

This background makes the sale of indulgences not only theologically corrupt, but also morally reprehensible. People were not only given false hope of salvation; they were literally exploited in the name of God. Their guilt was manipulated to bring in money. They paid for the construction of churches they would never see, to shorten the sins of family members, based on a doctrine that was nowhere to be found in Scripture.

The indulgence preachers were well trained. One of the most notorious was Johann Tetzel, who visited villages and towns with great fanfare, preached about the horrors of purgatory, and then called on people to pay. He is said to have said:

"As soon as the coin clinks in the box, the soul springs from purgatory."

And people believed it. Because what if your mother really was there? What if your child was suffering at that moment? Then you would give everything you had—even if it was your last coin.

What you see here is a combination of theological lies and financial slavery. And that combination made Rome powerful. Because whoever controls salvation and money controls everything.

Most people knew nothing about the arrangements between the pope and the bankers. They only saw a priest, a preacher, a letter of indulgence, and hope. But behind the scenes, there was a system built on interest, debt, deception, and fear.

And that is exactly what Luther began to expose.

"See to it that no one robs you of your inheritance by philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, and not according to Christ." Colossians 2:8

Rome had replaced faith in Christ with a system of human intermediaries, fixed rates for sins, and church rituals that sold salvation as if it were bread at the market.

But Scripture teaches that forgiveness comes only through Christ—without money, without indulgences, without the pope.

“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Isaiah 55:1

The truth is: forgiveness is free—because it was purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ. Rome sold what it did not possess, and the people paid with poverty, false hope, and lost trust.

And that is why reformation was necessary.

The church as a commodity: indulgences as a trade good

What Rome had created in Luther's time was a religious system that functioned as a marketplace. Everything was for sale: forgiveness, offices, marriages, privileges, even eternal salvation — as long as you could pay. The church had been transformed from a spiritual home into an economic empire, and the people were its customers in an eternal shop.

Indulgences were the most visible example of this perverse trade. Instead of preaching the Gospel, preaching became a marketing campaign. The message was simple: you can shorten your time in purgatory—or that of your deceased loved ones—if you pay now. It sounded like an offer with an expiration date. And people believed it because it was told to them by men with robes, crosses, and church institutions behind them.

One might ask: how could this have penetrated so deeply? How could entire peoples go along with this form of spiritual extortion?

The answer is tragically simple: people did not know the Bible.

The common man could not read the Scriptures. Latin was the language of the Mass, of the laws, of theology. And the clergy deliberately kept it that way. For as long as the people did not know the truth, they remained dependent on lies. And lies are profitable.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Hosea 4:6

This Bible verse became painfully apparent in 16th-century Europe. The people were subjected to a religion that oppressed them in the name of God. And any attempt at resistance was seen as heresy, resulting in torture or burning at the stake.

But when Luther began translating the Bible, everything changed.

It was as if a veil had been lifted. People began to see that nowhere in the New Testament is there any mention of indulgences, papal authority, purgatory, or a system in which forgiveness must be bought.

The truth was revolutionary in its simplicity:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

No priest is needed for that. No letter of absolution. No payment. Only a sincere heart that bows before God.

What Luther understood—and later the other reformers as well—was that this gospel not only liberated people spiritually, but also pulled them out of the grip of a corrupt power system. And that was what Rome feared.

A people who read, think, and pray—without the intervention of a priest—are a free people.

And that is why Luther had to be stopped. That is why Bibles were burned. That is why translators were executed. Not because people were afraid of the letter, but because of the truth that lived in it.

For truth sets you free. And freedom means the end of tyranny.

Rome's fear of the Word in the vernacular

One of the greatest threats to the Roman Catholic system in Martin Luther's time was not protest, but the translation of the Bible. For as long as the people could not read the Scriptures for themselves, Rome remained the undisputed authority on what was "true." But as soon as the Scriptures were handed over to the common people, in their own mother tongue, Rome's authority began to crumble.

That is why the pope did not respond with reconciliation or dialogue, but with violence. Luther had to be excommunicated, his books burned, and his followers silenced.

Why? Because they had given the people something more dangerous than any sword: the knowledge of the truth. And the truth cannot be controlled by hierarchy or institutions.

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:32

In many parts of Europe, owning a Bible in the vernacular was a crime. In England, this led to the arrest, conviction, and execution of William Tyndale, who was responsible for the first translation of the Bible directly from Greek and Hebrew into English. His crime? Enabling people to read God's Word for themselves. Tyndale's last words, just before his execution, were a prayer: "Lord, open the eyes of the King of England."

His prayer was answered—but only years later. In the meantime, blood flowed. A lot of blood. Translating the Bible became an act of resistance. Because truth in the hands of the people meant the end of spiritual dictatorship.

Rome claimed that the people were too stupid to understand the Bible. That the Scriptures would be misinterpreted. That it would lead to division.

And yes, the Reformation brought division—but it was a purifying division. It separated truth from falsehood, light from darkness, faith from superstition.

The real reason Rome banned the Word was not out of concern for souls — it was to preserve power. For if people were to discover that the Bible said nothing about popes, indulgences, misplaced sacrifices, or Marian devotion, their entire structure would collapse.

And that is what happened.

For when Luther translated the New Testament into German, it was not read by theologians, but by peasants, housewives, students, and craftsmen. The Word found its way into everyday life. And that is where the real Reformation began.

For reformation does not begin in cathedrals, but in hearts. Not with dogma, but with open eyes.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105

Falsification, deception, and the construction of St. Peter's Basilica

While the people toiled and sacrificed to buy forgiveness, money from the sale of indulgences flowed richly to Rome. It was intended, so they said, for the construction of a new basilica in honor of Saint Peter: St. Peter's. But behind that noble façade lay deception. It was not a purely religious project; it was a monument to power, a palace of stone intended to confirm the greatness of the papacy.

Papal propaganda presented it as a matter of honor and devotion: give, so that God's house can be built. But in reality, much of the money collected was used for other purposes—to pay off loans, finance luxurious papal courts, and reward loyal cardinals.

And the people? They thought their money was saving souls from
purgatory.

The system worked because it was driven by guilt and fear. Who wanted to be responsible for the suffering of a deceased mother or child? The message was subtle and compelling at the same time: if you can pay but don't, you are letting your loved ones suffer. Thus, mercy became a moral duty, and guilt a source of profit.

Even the letters of indulgence were a deception. They claimed to grant complete forgiveness — for eternity. But in small print it sometimes stated that the punishment was only temporary. Rome spoke with a forked tongue. The people were given hope for certainty; legal cover was preserved in the documents.

"Woe to those who buy justice with money, and who open the gates of heaven to those who can afford it."

It is therefore no coincidence that Luther directed his 95 theses against precisely this system. He did not simply speak out against "Rome" or "the pope," but against the lie that grace can be bought. His first thesis was crystal clear:

"When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ says, 'Repent,' He means that the entire life of a believer is to be one of repentance."

No payment. No certificate. No indulgence.

Luther understood that if people truly know that forgiveness is free—because Christ paid for it—then there is no longer any place for fear, guilt trading, or ecclesiastical coercion.

And therein lay the danger for Rome.

As long as the truth remained hidden, the money kept flowing. But when the truth came to light, the whole structure threatened to collapse. And that is what happened—bit by bit—through the power of the Word and the conscience of one man who refused to remain silent.

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” John 8:32

The spiritual monopoly of Rome exposed

What Rome had built up over centuries was a spiritual monopoly—a system in which salvation, knowledge of Scripture, and access to God were completely controlled by a small elite. The pope stood at the top as Christ’s representative, surrounded by a hierarchy of cardinals, bishops, and priests who controlled every aspect of religious life. Without them, it was claimed, no one could be saved.

They claimed: *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* — outside the church there is no salvation. And by "church" they did not mean the universal body of believers, but the Roman Catholic Church under papal authority.

This gave them absolute power. The key to heaven was supposedly in their hands. And with that key, they determined who would be granted access, how long someone would remain in purgatory, and how much penance was required.

But the key was forged. The power did not come from God, but from a human-made system, fueled by fear, ignorance, and tradition. And that power was maintained with iron discipline: heretics were hunted down, writings were burned, Bibles were banned, reformers were put to death.

For whoever loses the monopoly loses everything.

That is why Rome responded with brute force to every reform movement. Not because it feared false doctrine, but because it feared free consciences and open Bibles.

The true core of the Reformation was this: the conscience of man was returned to God. No longer bound by the judgment of a priest or the absolution of a pope, but free to read Scripture, believe, and obey Christ alone.

“There is one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.” 1 Timothy 2:5

With that one sentence, the entire system of priests, masses, indulgences, and papal absolutism collapsed. For if Christ alone is enough, then Rome is superfluous.

The true church, the reformers taught, is not the institution with the most gold, the largest basilica, or the longest tradition. The true church is where the Word is preached, where the sacraments are administered biblically, and where Christ is the Head.

Luther wrote:

“I am a poor, unworthy man. But I have the Word of God. And that is enough.”

Rome built on splendor, power, and tradition. The Reformation built on truth. And truth needs no palace—only an open heart.

Man between God and Rome: who has the last word?

In the Roman Catholic system, man never stood directly before God. There was always an intermediary: a priest, a confessor, a pope. The believer was kept dependent on the judgment of others regarding his spiritual state. Was he good enough? Had he done enough? Was his repentance sincere? Someone else had to judge.

Someone else had the power to grant absolution — or to refuse it.

This was a system that kept people small, insecure, and bound. Even the dying were not sure whether they had truly been forgiven. Because there was always something that could be missing—a sin forgotten to be confessed, a mistake too late to be corrected, a payment too late to be made. Death never came with peace, but with doubt.

That is why the system of indulgences was so attractive and so destructive. It promised peace, but on human terms. And that makes it not gospel, but slavery.

The Reformation brought the revolution that the people needed: direct access to God through faith in Jesus Christ, without the intervention of church offices or rituals.

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus...” Hebrews 10:19

That boldness—that confidence—was exactly what Rome did not want to give the people. For a people who boldly approach God have no need of a pope. No confessional. No letter of indulgence.

The reformers countered that Scripture says that believers are justified by faith, and that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. That is a promise from God, not a favor from the pope.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” Romans 8:1

What a difference. No fear, no uncertainty, no eternal doubt—but certainty, peace, grace.

And that is what made the message of the Reformation so powerful. It freed people from centuries of spiritual tyranny. It gave them a foundation that was not based on the word of man, but on the Word of God.

Today, that struggle is no less relevant. The names have changed, the forms have been modernized, but the principle remains: where people place others between God and the soul, the freedom of the Gospel is undermined.

And that is why we must always return to the core:

Christ alone. Faith alone. Grace alone. Scripture alone.

Luther's legacy: truth above tradition

When Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, he did not know that he would change the course of history. He was not thinking of revolution, but of reform. He did not want a break with the church, but a conversion of the church. What he demanded was simple: let God's Word be the highest authority again.

But that proved unacceptable to a system built on tradition, power, and money. Rome could tolerate anything—except the Word that transcended its boundaries.

What Luther started was not a rebellion against authority, but a return to true authority. It was not an attack on an institution, but a plea for pure faith. He did not put himself at the center, but the Scriptures. And he reminded people of what the church had forgotten: that Christ is not a symbol, but the foundation; not part of the faith, but the whole.

“No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 3:11

The legacy of the Reformation is not to be found in images, buildings, or organizations, but in hearts that bow to the truth. And that truth is never the property of a church, pope, or synod. It belongs to God, and He reveals it to those who seek Him with a sincere heart.

What is that truth?

That salvation is not bought, but given. That forgiveness is not earned, but received. That access to God is not mediated by people, but freely obtained through Christ.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9

Luther's struggle is also our struggle. Not against people, but against systems that trade truth for power, grace for ritual, and faith for tradition. In every generation, the Gospel is in danger of being obscured—sometimes by religion, sometimes by convenience, sometimes by fear.

That is why we must continue to carry the torch. Not by repeating what others have said, but by returning anew to Scripture, to the simplicity of Christ, to the cross.

Luther's strength did not lie in his voice, but in his conscience — bound to the Word of God. His legacy is a call to each of us to follow the same path: not the broad road of human approval, but the narrow road of divine truth.

“Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me.” — Martin Luther

Chapter 6

The Purchase of Ecclesiastical Power and the Decline of Rome

This speech picks up where it left off, at the moment when it becomes clear that Martin Luther, although initially only seeking reform, ultimately found himself diametrically opposed to the ecclesiastical and financial establishment of his time. While ordinary people

lived in poverty, the bishops and cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church flourished in splendor—not through honest labor, but through doctrines such as purgatory and the sale of indulgences.

What Luther did not fully understand in his time, but what we can now see clearly, is that a dark system lurked behind the façade of the church. Not only priests and popes, but above all the financiers – the bankers – determined the fate of dioceses and positions of spiritual power. As explained in the transcript, the sale of bishoprics for exorbitant sums was a common practice. These offices were bought with money borrowed from bankers, after which the buyer had to collect tithes and donations from his diocese for years to pay off the debts – and make a profit.

Luther's opposition to the practice of indulgences therefore not only struck a religious nerve, but also hit the economic foundations of the papacy. By addressing his 95 theses to Albrecht, Archbishop of Mainz – who was deeply in debt to the Fugger banking family – he unwittingly stirred up a hornet's nest. What was a theological concern for him was a direct threat to the income stream of those in power.

This conflict revealed that papal authority was based not so much on faith or spiritual truth as on a monetary system. And it was precisely this system that was exposed when Luther continued to insist in public: "My conscience is bound to the Word of God."

Luther's famous words at the Diet of Worms—that he could not go against his conscience without betraying himself and the truth—testify to an inner certainty rooted in the gospel. He did not oppose the church as an institution, but a church that had sold its soul to mammon.

This first section of transcript 6 further emphasizes how the entire practice of selling indulgences relied on the doctrine of purgatory, a non-biblical teaching that served as a tool to instill fear and collect money. The dead could supposedly be helped, but only through money, masses, gifts, and prayers – all for a price.

What Luther exposed was that the faith of millions of people was being abused to finance wars, palaces, and banquets for an elite. And although many considered this system "holy," it turned out to be a mechanism of slavery—both spiritual and economic.

Let this be an example to us: truth and Scripture must always take precedence over human institutions and traditions, even if the whole world turns against them. Luther stood alone, but he stood firm.

“Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.”

The confessional as a bank counter – Rome's abuse of spiritual anguish

This part of the transcript reveals how the Roman Catholic system not only sold indulgences on the market, but also exploited people's deepest fears through the confessional. The priest became the trusted intermediary, but also the controller of consciences and wallets.

Those who wanted to atone for their sins not only had to confess and show remorse, but often also had to pay. In theory, the penance was spiritual: prayer, fasting, a pilgrimage. But in practice, it was money. Literally. In exchange for "spiritual assistance," Rome offered

temporary or even eternal relief from punishment—depending on what you gave. The confessional became a kind of spiritual bank counter: the penitent laid down his debt and paid with coins.

And all this was justified by the doctrine of purgatory — a place of purification where souls remained until their temporary punishments were fulfilled. But Scripture knows no purgatory. It is a fabrication, born of a mixture of pagan ideas and ecclesiastical tradition, used to sow fear and maintain control.

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Hebrews 9:27

This text alone refutes the entire idea of temporary punishment after death. But the people in Luther's time could not read this. The Bible was not available to the common man. So people trusted what the priest said.

And the priest spoke on behalf of Rome. And Rome spoke on its own behalf.

What was worse, this system was packaged in piety. It seemed holy. Everything was said in Latin. There were rituals, incense, vestments, sacred formulas. But beneath that exterior lay pure commerce. No forgiveness through faith, but through payment. No peace through Christ, but through indulgences.

The gospel was replaced by a system of reckoning.

Luther's discovery of Romans 1:17 — "The righteous shall live by faith" — hit like a bomb. For if that was true, then the entire structure of indulgences, purgatory, penance, and papal power was a lie. And that was precisely the point: it was a lie.

But it was a profitable lie. And that is why Luther had to remain silent. But he did not remain silent.

This part shows us how deep Rome's control went: not only over the body, money, or public worship, but over people's consciences. Those who resisted became not only enemies of the church, but of God—at least, that's how it was presented.

"Woe to those who speak the truth in a world that lives by lies."

But Luther spoke. And that is why the Reformation did not begin with a war, but with a word. A word of truth against a sea of deceit.

The false security of a letter of indulgence

This third part takes a closer look at the misleading reassurance that the letter of indulgence gave to the people. The pope had—so to speak—the "key power" to forgive sins, and on that basis indulgences were issued. The buyer took home a beautifully decorated letter, signed and sealed, with the assurance that his sins were forgiven—or even those of his deceased relatives.

But in reality, this letter had no power, no spiritual effect, and no basis in Scripture. It was a paper lie with a golden edge.

People read it, wept with relief, and truly believed that they had rescued their mother from purgatory. And so the deception was complete: the buyer felt secure, the seller became rich, and the pope could continue building his basilica.

What Luther recognized was that this false security was more dangerous than open unbelief. For the letter of indulgence gave the people the feeling that they were right with God, while they were still lost. Their trust was not placed in Christ, but in Rome, in paper, in money.

“Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord.” Jeremiah 17:5

That was exactly what Rome had done: taught the people to trust in men—in priests, in popes, in paper—instead of in the living God. The indulgence became not only a monetary transaction, but also a spiritual alienation: the people were removed from the cross and bound to a system.

And that is why the letter of indulgence was not only useless—it was blasphemous. For it claimed to be able to do what only Christ can do: forgive.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins...” 1 John 1:9

No pope, no letter, no payment. Only faith and confession.

What Luther exposed was that the Roman system was not based on truth, but on deception wrapped in religious piety. And the people, ignorant and poor, were led like sheep to the slaughter.

The letter of indulgence was a reassurance without substance. An insurance policy without coverage. And the soul that trusted in it was deceived.

That is why Luther said:

“If the Pope truly has the power to free souls from purgatory, why doesn't he do it for free, out of love?”

A question that still cuts deep.

The fear of the Word of God in the hands of the people

The Roman Catholic Church feared knowledge more than heresy. For anyone who could read the Word of God for themselves would see that the teachings of Rome—with its indulgences, purgatory, papal infallibility, and veneration of Mary—had no basis in Scripture. That is why the Bible was deliberately kept out of the hands of the people. It was kept in Latin, and translating it into the vernacular was punished as a crime.

The Church claimed that Scripture was too difficult for the common man. That the laity would misunderstand it, that confusion would arise, that the authority of the Church was necessary to explain its true meaning.

But in reality, it was about power. Whoever possesses the Scriptures possesses the sword of truth. And truth sets us free.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105

As soon as the people began to read the Scriptures in their own language, the system began to falter. People discovered that Jesus did not ask for gold, but for faith. That Peter was not a pope, but an apostle among others. That forgiveness did not come from Rome, but from the cross of Christ.

William Tyndale, who translated the Bible into English, said:

“If God spares my life, I will make sure that a boy behind the plow knows more about Scripture than the pope.”

For such words, he was imprisoned and strangled. But his translation lived on. And with every Bible that was printed, Rome lost a piece of its absolute grip.

What Luther did was revolutionary: he gave the people back the Word of God. Not as the property of the Church, but as the inheritance of every believer. And the people read.

And the people saw.

And the people broke free from a yoke that had weighed them down for centuries.

"The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple." Psalm 119:130

In this day and age, when many are once again becoming dependent on human interpretation, dogma, and religious institutions, the lesson of the Reformation is still relevant: put the Word in the hands of the people, and the truth will do its work.

The struggle between Christ and the papacy

In this part of the transcript, the true essence of the Reformation comes to the fore: it was not a clash between two opinions, but a battle between two kingdoms—the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the papacy.

Rome had made itself the center of Christianity, with the pope as “Christ’s representative,” the church as the only means of forgiveness, and the office as absolute authority. But the Bible teaches something completely different.

“And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead...” Colossians 1:18

The Head of the Church is not the pope—it is Jesus Christ. And those who belong to Him no longer need a human mediator.

But Rome had built a system that depended on intermediaries. Everything went through priests, through sacraments, through hierarchies. One could only reach Christ through the

Church—and that Church had to be obeyed. That made the papacy not a servant of Christ, but a competitor. And that was precisely Luther's accusation: Rome had placed itself on the throne that belonged only to Christ.

“No one can serve two masters...” Matthew 6:24

What Luther did was to put Christ back on His throne. Not only theologically, but practically: by teaching the people that their conscience must obey God — not the pope. And that the Word of Christ had more authority than councils, traditions, or decrees.

This caused an earthquake. For if Christ is truly King, then the papacy is superfluous and illegitimate. Then the entire structure of ecclesiastical slavery falls apart. And that is exactly what happened.

Rome had learned:

- The pope speaks *ex cathedra*, infallibly.
- The Church determines who will be saved.
- Grace flows through the sacraments. But the Word of God says:
 - Christ alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
 - Salvation is by grace through faith.
 - The Holy Spirit dwells in every believer, not in the papal throne.

The struggle was therefore not between Luther and Rome, but between the Gospel and a religious empire.

And the people chose. Millions left the papacy not because they followed Luther, but because they recognized Christ in the Word he proclaimed.

The false unity of the Roman Church unmasked

This section explains how the Roman Catholic Church managed to maintain its power for centuries by emphasizing its unity. It claimed: We are the only true church, because we are one. We have one pope, one doctrine, one tradition. Everything else is division and heresy.

But what the Reformation demonstrated is that unity without truth is merely organized error. For what good is unity if it is built on lies, deceit, and abuse of power?

Rome confused uniformity with spiritual unity. As long as everyone recognized the authority of the pope, everything was fine. But as soon as someone placed Scripture above the pope, he was considered an enemy. The unity of Rome was like that of Babel: impressive, humanly organized—and doomed to fall.

“They say, ‘Peace, peace,’ but there is no peace.” Jeremiah 6:14

The unity that Christ brings is of a different nature. It is not institutional obedience, but spiritual unity through faith in the truth. The true church is everywhere where Christ is honored as Head and His Word is the highest authority.

“That they may all be one, just as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us.” John 17:21

That is not a power structure. That is unity in truth and love, guided by the Spirit, not by a papal decree.

Rome, on the other hand, maintained its unity through fear, exclusion, and inquisition. Those who deviated from the official doctrine were excommunicated, imprisoned, or burned. And all this in the name of "the unity of the church."

Luther and the reformers broke through that façade. They demonstrated that the authority of Scripture stands above that of Rome, and that unity without truth is worthless. Better divided in truth than united in lies.

And what happened? As soon as the Word was set free, there was no chaos, but a new community of believers—simple, Bible-believing, without pomp and circumstance, but with power.

The true church did not need Rome. It had the Word, the blood of Christ, and the Holy Spirit. And that was enough.

The deification of the pope and the deception of infallibility

This section makes it clear: Rome did not merely give the pope a spiritual role—it elevated him to divine status. The pope became not only a leader, but “Christ’s representative on earth.” Whatever he said ex cathedra had to be accepted as infallible, as if God Himself were speaking.

But this is nothing less than sacrilege.

For only God is infallible. Only His Word is pure. And only Christ is the Head of the Church.

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” Matthew 24:35

Rome dared to take this place. And so the papacy became not only a power structure, but a false religion, with a man at its center. The Reformation revealed this: the pope had set himself on the throne of God—just as 2 Thessalonians 2 predicted about “the man of sin” who would set himself up in the temple of God as if he were God.

The doctrine of papal infallibility was only officially established at the First Vatican Council in 1870, but had been practiced for centuries. For whoever contradicted the pope supposedly contradicted God—and that meant excommunication, banishment, or death.

It was a stranglehold: the people had to bow to a human authority that called itself divine, when in reality it was an instrument of control. The reformers saw through this and chose to obey God rather than men.

"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 2:5

No pope. No Mary. No priest. Only Christ.

What Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and others did was restore the throne of Christ in the conscience of the believer. No longer bound to a bishop in Rome, but set free by the Word and the Spirit.

The deification of the pope is the ultimate fruit of a church that abandoned Scripture. And as long as people recognize this false power, they will remain under the yoke of Babylon.

But those who read the Word with an open heart will discover: Christ is enough.

The legacy of the Reformation—back to Christ alone

In this final part of Transcript 6, a clear and powerful call is made: return to the simplicity and purity of the Gospel. The Reformation was not a historical event with merely theological propositions—it was a spiritual liberation.

Millions of people were torn from the clutches of a religious system that had placed itself between God and man.

For centuries, Rome had taught the people that they could only approach God through the Church—through the pope, through Mary, through sacraments, through penance. But the reformers returned to the Word and rediscovered what the apostles had long proclaimed:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9

This is the heart of the Gospel. And this is what the Reformation brought back to the forefront: no human works, no ecclesiastical intermediaries, no payment—only grace, only faith, only Christ, only Scripture, only to God's glory.

These five solas still form the foundation of true Christian doctrine.

But the battle is not over. Rome has not changed. The doctrine of purgatory, papal infallibility, the veneration of Mary, the Eucharistic sacrifice—these are still part of the system. And once again, a false unity is being sought worldwide: an ecumenical movement that sacrifices truth for peace and replaces conviction with compromise.

That is why the voice of the Reformation must continue to be heard. Not as nostalgia, but as a necessity.

Scripture does not call us to bow down to people, but to stand up in truth: “And you will

know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” John 8:32

Luther's legacy lives on in every believer who values the Word above tradition, Christ above church leaders, and grace above works.

It's not a question of denomination, but of heartfelt conviction:

- Who is your Mediator?
- On what does your certainty rest?— What is your source of truth?

If the answer to all these questions is not Christ alone, then there is work to be done. Then conversion is necessary. Not to a movement, but to the living Christ.

The Reformation was a cry: “Back to the Bible!”

Today, that must be our cry: “Back to the cross. Back to Christ. Only He saves.”

Chapter 7

God's People and the Moral Preparation for the Battle Against Babylon

Before we as God's people can truly deal with the truth about Babylon and our assignment in it, we must first face the fact that we are morally unprepared. We want to overthrow Babylon, yes, but inwardly we are often no better than those who built Babylon.

When we look at the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, for example, we see that God gave these laws as a foundation for His people. And yet—what do we see today in so-called Christianity? A complete disregard for those commandments. We have idols, not just literally in images, but also in the form of systems, money, comfort, entertainment. We swear false oaths, we dishonor our parents, commit adultery, steal, lie, and covet. Not only in the world, but also among those who say they are God's people.

The system that now rules over us—Babylon—is in fact nothing more than a mirror of our own sins, magnified and centralized. Economic injustice, deceitful politics, violent culture, and religious confusion can all be traced back to the moral weakness of the people.

Those who claim to be Christians often live in direct violation of God's laws. They acknowledge God's name with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him. And that is precisely why Babylon still exists. For as long as God's people do not break with their own transgressions, He will not use them to destroy Babylon.

We want to be free from Babylon—but do we really want to be free from sin? Do we really want to apply God's law as the standard in our lives? Or do we just want to get rid of Babylon because it is starting to become uncomfortable?

God does not call us merely to battle. He calls us to holiness. To return to His word. To restore His laws in our homes, in our relationships with others, in our economy, and in our education. Only then, when we confess our sins, cast away our idols, and keep His commandments, can He use us as His weapon against the world system.

That is why the battle against Babylon does not begin with swords or voices or demonstrations — it begins in our hearts. With obedience.

The Appearance of Piety and the Lack of Justice

In this second part, it becomes clear that many people today have a form of godliness but deny its power. They go to church, sing songs, talk about grace and faith — but refuse to obey God's commands. They live as if the moral foundation of Scripture has become optional.

“Having a form of godliness but denying its power. From such turn away.” 2 Timothy 3:5
God’s commandments are often ignored or spiritually rationalized away. Take, for example, the fourth commandment: the Sabbath. Many ignore it completely or claim that it has been “abolished,” without any biblical proof. Others proclaim love and grace but refuse to speak the truth about sin, righteousness, and judgment.

What we see today in organized Christianity is Babylon with a cross stuck on top. The same greed, the same materialism, the same lies—just with a religious sauce poured over it. It is called a “church,” but it has become an extension of the world system.

People defend this state of affairs by referring to feelings, tradition, or human reasoning. They say, “We live under grace, not under the law,” but they forget that grace leads us to obedience—not to lawlessness.

"Will you really give to the LORD what the LORD delights in? Is the burnt offering so important to you as obedience to the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen is better than the fat of rams." 1 Samuel 15:22

The great error of this age is that people think they can serve God on their own terms. That they can receive blessings without obedience. That they can separate justification from sanctification. But that is not the gospel of the Bible—that is the gospel of Babylon.

And as long as this remains the case, God's people are useless in His battle. For He will not send His warriors as long as they behave like the enemy.

The truth is: God's calling on His people is high. Not only in doctrine, but in lifestyle. And whoever wants to resist Babylon must first drive Babylon out of his own heart.

Breaking the covenant and forgetting vows

This section emphasizes a painful but necessary point: God's people have forgotten their vows. Just as Israel repeatedly promised to follow the LORD in the Old Testament but repeatedly strayed, so modern Christianity lives in broken promises.

When people were baptized or made their confession of faith, they promised to follow Christ, forsake sin, and walk in the path of righteousness. But many have forgotten those vows as if they meant nothing. They live as if they never promised anything—or worse, as if their words carry no weight.

“When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it, for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed.” Ecclesiastes 5:4

The seriousness of a covenant with God is not optional. God takes His covenant very seriously—after all, it cost the blood of His Son. But what do we see? People break marriages as if it were nothing. People promise faithfulness in the faith and then return to the world. People talk about “following Jesus” but stray as soon as it becomes uncomfortable.

And therein lies the cause of our weakness. God cannot build an army on lies and broken vows. If His people are unreliable, how can they stand in the battle against a system built on deception?

The prophets repeatedly warned Israel about this same problem: breaking the covenant leads to judgment. Not because God has no mercy, but because He has no part in falsehood. He desires truth in the innermost being—integrity, obedience, faithfulness.

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you...” Hosea 4:6

The knowledge that has been lost is not merely theological knowledge—it is the awareness of holiness, of responsibility, of covenant faithfulness. And as long as God's people do not regain this, there will be no victory over Babylon. First there must be restoration of vows, of faithfulness, of sanctification.

For whoever forgets the covenant will never be able to wield the sword in God's army.

The Violation of the Sabbath – A Mirror of National Disobedience

One of the most ignored and distorted commandments of God is the fourth: the commandment concerning the Sabbath. God does not say, “Remember the Lord’s day, whichever day you choose,” but very specifically:

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.” Exodus 20:8-10

The Sabbath is not Jewish—it is God's. In Genesis 2, we see that God blessed and sanctified the seventh day long before Moses, before Sinai, before Israel existed as a people. It is a universal, creation-wide covenant—reaffirmed at Mount Sinai as a sign between God and His people.

“You shall keep My Sabbaths; for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations...” Exodus 31:13

But Babylon—the system that opposes God's authority—has replaced this day with Sunday, the worship of the sun, introduced by Rome and reinforced by church tradition. This is not merely a calendar change—it is rebellion. It is changing times and laws, just as Daniel 7:25 predicted.

The so-called “Lord’s Day” has been moved by men from the seventh to the first day of the week. But nowhere in the New Testament is this commandment revoked. Jesus kept the Sabbath. The apostles kept the Sabbath — even after the resurrection. Paul preached on the Sabbath, even to Gentiles. Nowhere did he call for Sunday observance.

What we see today is that the vast majority of Christianity lives in tradition rather than obedience. People say that the law has been abolished, but they accept Roman legislation without hesitation. The true Sabbath has been forgotten, replaced, and even slandered as "legalistic" or "Old Testament."

But the Sabbath is not legalistic—it is holy.

“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” Mark 2:27

As long as God’s people reject this truth, they will remain weak against Babylon. For obedience is not a minor matter. It is the foundation upon which God builds His people.

The return to the Sabbath is not a return to an old ritual, but to God’s authority, God’s rhythm, and God’s rest. Those who restore the Sabbath restore the sign of the covenant—and turn away from the mark of the beast.

The Counterfeiting of God's Feasts and Babylon's Role in the Calendar

In this section, the veil is lifted on an aspect that many overlook: the times we consider "holy" were in many cases not established by God, but by people—by Babylon. Think of Christmas, Easter, All Saints' Day, and especially Sunday worship. These are feasts and times that do not have their roots in God's Word, but in pagan systems that were later Christianized.

“And he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change the times and the law...” Daniel 7:25

The prophecy is clear: the system we call Babylon would try to change the times (feasts, days of rest) and the law of God. And that is exactly what we see in church history. The feasts of the Bible—such as Passover, the Feast of Trumpets, and the Feast of Tabernacles—have been systematically replaced by non-biblical traditions.

Rome gave its own interpretation of worship. It replaced the Passover lamb with Easter bread, the Sabbath with Sunday, and established a calendar of saints and church holidays. All of this was presented as Christian, but it was nothing more than a replacement of God's ordinances with human institutions.

“But in vain they honor Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” Matthew 15:9

This replacement has not only led to confusion, but also to spiritual unfaithfulness. For whoever abandons God's timing enters the enemy's territory. And that is precisely why Babylon retains its power: God's people live according to Babylonian times, systems, and patterns.

As long as we ignore God's times, we are like warriors who show up on the battlefield at the wrong moment. God gave us His calendar for a reason—as a sanctuary in time, as a reminder, as a time of rest, as a time of preparation. By replacing that calendar, Babylon has robbed the people of their spiritual orientation.

The restoration of God's calendar is essential. Not as a legalistic duty, but as spiritual obedience. It is a return to His order, His rhythm, His revelations.

“He made the moon for the seasons; the sun knows its going down.” Psalm 104:19

The times of God are not a Jewish peculiarity, but divine structures. And whoever wants to resist Babylon must abandon the calendar of Babel and return to that of the Most High.

The Economic Sins of God's People and the Powers of Babylon

In this section, the economic injustice of God's people is examined—a sin that is often ignored, but which is central to the battle against Babylon. For Babylon is not only a spiritual system, but also an economic system of exploitation, profit-seeking, and unjust trade.

And what do we see? Many so-called believers are just as guilty. They act like the world. They borrow with interest, they speculate, they oppress workers, they turn a deaf ear to widows and orphans. And they justify all this with the idea that "everyone does it" or "that's just the way things are today."

“You shall not charge your brother interest, whether it be for money, for food, for anything that is not your own.” Deuteronomy 23:19

God's law is clear: there shall be no charging of interest among His people. No usury. No greed. No exploitation. The people were to be an example of justice, of honesty, of caring for one another. But instead, the people have adopted the sins of Babylon — and then dare to pray for deliverance?

When businesses are built on lies and manipulation, when the Sabbath is ignored for the sake of "turnover," when people are systematically squeezed while shareholders get richer, that is not just capitalism — it is Babylon.

“Your silver has become dross, your wine is mixed with water. Your princes are rebellious and companions of thieves.” Isaiah 1:22-23

The people of God must not build on the system that God wants to destroy. If we want to expose and overthrow Babylon, we must first confess and abandon the economic sins in our own midst.

That means:

- No lying scales (deception in trade)
- No interest among brothers
- No underpayment of workers
- No greed at the expense of justice

For as long as we eat at the table of Babel, we cannot fight for the Kingdom of God. Then we are accomplices. And God will not give weapons to people who have not yet left the enemy camp.

Grace under the New Covenant – Not a License to Sin

In this penultimate section, the true meaning of grace under the New Covenant is emphasized—a message that is often misused today as an excuse to ignore God's law. Many say, "We are under the New Covenant, so the law no longer applies." But that is a lie from Babylon, intended to separate the people from obedience to God.

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts...” Hebrews 8:10

The New Covenant does not abolish the law—it writes it in the heart. It changes the location, not the content. Where the law was once written on stone, it is now written in the conscience. Sin has not changed, God's standard has not been lowered. What has changed is the access to forgiveness and the power to obey—through the Spirit of Christ.

“Does the law then make sin? Far be it from that! For through the law I became conscious of sin...” Romans 7:7

The message of grace is not a license to do whatever one wants. It is an invitation to repentance, to rebirth, to obedience out of love. Grace is not contrary to the law—it is the bridge back to the law.

But Babylon has twisted this. Babylon says, “You don’t have to keep the commandments. Do what feels right. God understands.” Thus grace is reduced to a weak excuse, and the people are desecrated. This is exactly the tactic Satan used in Eden: “You will not die.” And today Babylon says, “God no longer punishes. He is only love.” But true love hates evil. True love leads to obedience. “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” John 14:15

The grace of the New Covenant is not an umbrella for lawlessness. It is the power to keep the law with joy, from a renewed heart. And that is the people God will use: those who do not merely say they believe, but who walk in His ways—not in their own strength, but by His Spirit.

Sanctification as a Condition for Victory over Babylon

We have now come to the conclusion of this study, and it is an emphatic call to something that is rarely preached anymore: sanctification. Not as religious behavior, not as outward piety, but as a deep-rooted obedience to God's will, wrought by the Spirit.

The fall of Babylon—the world system of confusion, oppression, godlessness, and nominal Christianity—will not be brought about by masses of Christians who are busy with conferences, praise bands, or campaigns. No, it will come through a small, dedicated remnant that has truly separated itself from the world and returned to God's commandments, His calendar, His laws, and His Son.

“Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.” Joshua 3:5

God demands purification before victory. We cannot complain about the sins of the world one moment and then participate in its holidays, its economy, its time schedule, and its false religion the next. As long as we resemble Babylon, we have no authority over Babylon.

The battle that is coming is spiritual—but it requires a people who are physically, morally, and spiritually set apart. As it says in Revelation:

“And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, and so that you will not receive any of her plagues.’” Revelation 18:4

The call to sanctification is not a suggestion. It is the only path to deliverance and victory. Those who do not separate themselves will be judged with the system. Those who purify themselves will be preserved.

This requires choices. Clear, radical choices:

- No more Sunday celebrations, but Sabbath restoration.
- No more idols in your home or heart.
- No more lies in business, politics, or personal relationships.
- No more Babylon in our thoughts, clothing, lives, and worship.

God is waiting for a people who "bear His Name," but also walk in His ways. Not through perfection, but through faithfulness. Not through strength, but through surrender. Not through religion, but through obedience.

This is the moment. No more time for delay. No more room for lukewarmness. Babylon will fall—and those who stand on God's side will remain standing.

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives even unto death.” Revelation 12:11

Let the Reformation not be just a memory. Let it be a calling—to holiness, to truth, to battle.

Chapter 8

The Commercial Foundations of Mystery Babylon

The prophecy about Babylon in Revelation 17 and 18 shows us not just a religious or political system—it is above all a commercial empire. Babylon is a global power that thrives on trade, wealth, and exploitation. Its influence reaches every country, every port, every nation.

“For her merchants were the great men of the earth, and in her was found the inhabitants of all, and the lovers of pleasure and luxury.” Revelation 18:3

This shows that Babylon does not obtain its power through military force alone, but through economic enchantment. The people of God — and the whole world — have been seduced by a system that promises wealth and luxury, when in reality it depends on slavery, injustice, and spiritual harlotry.

The riches described in Revelation 18 are not random: “Gold and silver and precious stones and pearls, and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and all kinds of woodwork, and all kinds of ivory vessels...” Revelation 18:12

This list almost resembles a trade catalog—a divine indictment of a global market economy that has its origins not in justice, but in greed.

What this prophecy also makes clear is that Mystery Babylon has become rich through war. War is the instrument by which this system opens markets, secures raw materials, subjugates people, and builds infrastructure for its own trade. Under the guise of "freedom" and "civilization," countries are plundered, economies are taken over, and people become slaves to banks and corporations.

This transcript specifically mentions the Vietnam War as an example. That war was not fought for freedom, but for commerce. Factories worked overtime. The industrial complexes of the West earned billions. And the blood of young men was shed for profit — not for justice.

Mystery Babylon disguises its agenda with words such as democracy, freedom, protection — but those who look beyond the façade see what it really is: a money machine that sacrifices human lives on the altar of greed.

And this system works perfectly with religion. Because Babylon knows that a purely commercial agenda is not enough — it needs spiritual justification. That is why it uses churches, leaders, preachers — to lull the people to sleep, to bless war, to preach obedience to the system.

“And the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints...” Revelation 17:6

As long as God's people do not face this, they will remain deceived. For those who do not recognize Babylon's commercial power will never be able to leave her.

The Vietnam War – A Babylonian Project

In this section, the prophetic light is focused on the Vietnam War—not as a random political event, but as a planned Babylonian project that fulfilled its function within the larger world system of trade, power, and deception.

The war in Vietnam cost millions of lives, destroyed villages, uprooted families — and yet the entire project was labeled “necessary” or even “heroic” by many Western leaders. But what was really behind it? Why did nations send thousands of young men to their deaths against an impoverished, agricultural people on the other side of the world?

Because Mystery Babylon leaves nothing to chance.

The war was, in reality, a construction project — a way to set up military infrastructure, build ports, lay pipelines, create economic access, and open new markets for Western companies. The roads that were built in Vietnam — and in similar conflicts — were not just for tanks, but for future trade.

“And the merchants of the earth are become rich through the abundance of her glory.”
Revelation 18:3

War is the hammer with which Babylon builds its economic cathedrals. And who pays the price? The sons of ordinary people. Boys aged 18, 19, 20, misled by patriotism, religious justification, and false images of the enemy.

And while they die in the rice fields, Babylon's shareholders line their pockets.

But even that is not the whole story. For prophecy teaches us that Mystery Babylon is female—not because it refers to a natural woman, but because the system presents itself as something beautiful, attractive, and protective. She is the "great whore"—not because of physical immorality, but because of her spiritual adultery. She promises peace and freedom, but sells slavery and death.

In many cases, the church was complicit. Preachers blessed the war. Christian media spoke of “protecting our way of life.” And no one asked the question: “Is this Babylon? Is this the system that God condemns in Revelation?”

We have been raised to think that war is something glorious. But in the eyes of the prophets, war is the tool of the wicked—and Babylon is the grand mistress in its use.

“For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.”
Revelation 18:5

Mystery Babylon can only function as long as people refuse to recognize her.

The Role of America as the Bearer of Babylon

This section emphasizes how the United States is not just one nation among many, but in many ways has become the primary vehicle of Mystery Babylon — especially in economic and military terms.

America presents itself as the defender of freedom, the bringer of democracy, and the champion of human rights. But beneath this façade, it functions as the executive body of the Babylonian world system. It is the sword, the bank, the propaganda channel, the world police, and the architect of trade routes.

“And the beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction...” Revelation 17:8

The prophecy speaks of a power that appears, disappears, and rises again—a pattern that many recognize in the world empires that have succeeded one another, culminating in the resurrected power that has established its global influence through America.

America does not just build roads in foreign countries — it builds systems: capitalist networks, financial slavery through debt, entertainment as distraction, religion as weapon, and military presence as control. The United States is essentially the extension of Rome, the beast that is coming back to life.

Even many well-meaning Christians do not realize that their country—their flag, their songs, their national pride—is being used to promote the Babylonian empire. Instead of separating themselves, they are helping to strengthen the system.

What makes all this even more poignant is that God has blessed America with power, wealth, and freedom—but that blessing has been misused. Instead of being a light, it has become an instrument of Babylon.

“For they say, ‘I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’” Revelation 18:7

The arrogance of Babylon lives on in the ideology of the West. “We are invincible. We are the light of the world. We are the forces of good.” But God calls it adultery, idolatry, arrogance, self-exaltation. And He warns:

“Therefore, in one day her plagues will come: death, mourning, and famine; and she will be burned with fire...” Revelation 18:8

Those who keep Babylon standing will share in her judgment. And those who serve her, however innocent it may seem, do not serve God.

The Church as Babylon's Accomplice

In this fourth part, a painful truth emerges: the organized church—yes, even many Protestant churches—is not Babylon's opponent, but has become its ally. What once began as a reformation has degenerated into a facade that covers the sins of the system with a layer of religious varnish.

How did this happen? Because Babylon knows that spiritual influence is essential to keeping people under control. You cannot subjugate people's hearts with weapons alone. You need a message that teaches them, "Don't resist. Submit. God willed it this way." And that is exactly what many ministers have done.

They have abolished God's law, rejected His Sabbath, ignored His feasts, perverted His people — and defended Babylon as if it were the Kingdom of God. They preach "grace" without obedience, "love" without truth, and "peace" without justice.

“But the prophets are like the wind, and there is no word in them.” Jeremiah 5:13

The modern preacher is often nothing more than a businessman in a religious costume. He defends the state. He blesses war. He speaks of “Israel” without knowing who Israel really is. He teaches about “blessings” without mentioning the conditions.

He is a priest of Babylon, not a shepherd of the Kingdom.

And Babylon uses these men to lull God's people to sleep. For as long as they think everything is fine — as long as they believe obedience is legalistic and God demands nothing more — they will never come out of Babylon.

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...” Hosea 4:6

This false religion is not a deviation; it is the heart of Babylon. The woman sitting on the beast in Revelation 17 is “clothed in purple and scarlet,” the colors of religious authority. She has a golden cup—symbol of outward religious splendor—but that cup is full of abominations and filthiness.

The true church of Jesus Christ is not connected to Babylon. She is separated. She speaks truth. She warns. She calls for repentance. She does not remain silent where injustice reigns. She calls sin by its name. And she does so regardless of the cost.

The Wine of Fornication – The Deception of the Nations

In this fifth part, we return to one of the most revealing images in the book of Revelation: the golden cup in the hand of the woman on the beast. That cup is full of "wine," and that wine is the doctrine of fornication—a mixture of truth and lies, of hypocrisy and idolatry, which makes the nations drunk.

“With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” Revelation 17:2

Mystery Babylon is a spiritual system that exerts its influence through deception. And people drink her wine—not because they are forced to, but because it seems attractive. The wine tastes sweet, religious, peaceful, full of grace and love—but it numbs the conscience, destroys discernment, and makes people weak.

That wine teaches:

- “The law has been abolished.”
- “Everyone is welcome, just as they are.”
- “God only wants your heart, not your obedience.”
- “Blessings come automatically, without conditions.”
- “Jesus has accomplished everything—you don’t need to do anything else.”

This wine has even contaminated the preaching. People speak of a “Jesus” who demands nothing, a “God” who no longer judges, a “gospel” without the crucifixion of the flesh. But that is not the Gospel of Scripture — it is the wine of Babylon.

“She says in her heart, ‘I sit as a queen... I will not see mourning.’” Revelation 18:7 That

self-confidence is dangerous. Babylon does not believe she will be judged. She thinks that her wealth, her influence, her religious alliances will protect her. But God says that her fall will come suddenly. And her wines will not save her. So God's people must choose: continue drinking that wine — or wake up.

For whoever defends Babylon participates in her sins. Whoever tastes her wine becomes like her. But whoever comes out of her will see, discern, and ultimately overcome.

“Come out of her, My people...” Revelation 18:4

The Profit of Babylon – And the Sale of Souls

In this sixth part, we return to the core of Babylon's power: trade. But it is not just any trade. It is not just about goods, gold, and spices—Babylon also trades in human souls. “And the trade of horses and chariots, and of the souls of men.” Revelation 18:13

What a revealing statement. In God's eyes, the Babylonian system is so corrupt that it no longer sees people as creatures of value, but as raw materials. As commodities. As capital.

And that is exactly what is happening today.

In wars such as Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan... lives are sacrificed for profit. In economies based on debt, slavery, and consumerism... people are used as bargaining chips.

The modern world no longer thinks in terms of justice, but in terms of profit. And beneath that calculation lie millions of crushed lives. People are molded into consumers, into workers, into soldiers, into followers — but not into saints.

Even religion participates. Churches are run like businesses. Evangelism becomes marketing. Preaching becomes branding. And the truth is watered down to keep the masses happy.

“For the merchants were the great men of the earth...” Revelation 18:23

Who are these merchants? They are the influential corporations, the billionaires, the media houses, the tech companies, the pharmaceutical industries, the banking elite. They dominate the market — and the mind. And under the guise of progress, they continue to build Babylon's tower higher and higher.

But God's judgment is coming. And it will be harsh.

“And a strong angel lifted up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, ‘Thus will Babylon, the great city, be thrown with violence, and will not be found anymore.’” Revelation 18:21

The only salvation is to get out. Not just physically—but mentally, spiritually, economically, culturally.

Babylon must be removed from the heart, from the home, from the church, from the language, from the holidays, from the beliefs.

God is building another kingdom. One that is not built on human trafficking, but on justice. Not on profit, but on truth. And He is calling His people—today.

The Silence of the Voices – Babylon is Extinguished

In this seventh part, we hear how the fall of Babylon will not only be visible, but also audible. Something that was once omnipresent will disappear: the noise, the music, the entertainment, the hubbub of a culture that was constantly preoccupied with itself—suddenly silent.

“And the voice of the harp and of the singer and of the flute and of the trumpet shall be heard no more in thee...” Revelation 18:22

What is this but the silence after the storm?

Babylon, that symbol of a world system that thrives on music, commerce, spectacle, and sensory stimulation, will be silenced. No more shows, no more glitz, no more religious rhetoric—only silence. For judgment has come.

Pay attention to what is mentioned:

1. *No more music*
2. *No more workers*
3. *No more light*
4. *No more voice of the bridegroom and bride*

Everything that seemed to sustain life is taken away. The outward splendor, the bustle, the ceremonies, the celebrations—nothing remains. And why?

“For your merchants were the great men of the earth, and in you all the nations have been taught to do ungodly things.” Revelation 18:3

Babylon's wealth was based on lies and deception. Her power did not come from God, but from manipulation. Her economic rise was steeped in sorcery — spiritual blindness, propaganda, seduction, worldly glamour.

And Babylon had blood on her hands.

“And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who dwell on the earth.” Revelation 18:24

God keeps score. Not only for the violence of the sword, but also for the violence of false teaching, false economics, false religion. And when the measure is full, He stops the noise. The applause dies down. The sermon show falls silent. The music fades away. And only judgment remains.

For God's people, this moment is liberation. But it requires that they leave Babylon before it falls. Not just with their feet, but with their hearts, their minds, their lives.

Come Out of Her, My People – The Last Call

We have now come to the conclusion of this prophetic study on Mystery Babylon, and the message is crystal clear:

God is calling His people out of Babylon.

Not tomorrow, not after the next election, not when the system collapses—now.

“And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, and so that you will not receive any of her plagues.’” Revelation 18:4

This call is not a suggestion. It is a command. For whoever remains in Babylon shares in her sins — and will share in her judgment. Babylon is not just a place or a city, but a system: a spiritual harlot, an economic tyrant, a religious deceiver.

God calls His people to:

Separate yourselves from her culture,

Detach themselves from her religious deception,

And to submit to His laws, His Word, and His Son.

Why? Because God wants a people who are holy, true, free from false teachings and false powers.

The real battle is not against people, governments, or institutions. The battle is for the heart, for the truth, for obedience. Babylon wants your loyalty—but God demands your devotion.

“Therefore, in one day her plagues will come: death, mourning, and famine; and she will be burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.” Revelation 18:8

The downfall of Babylon is certain. The only uncertainty is: are you still in the midst of it? Or do you belong to the remnant that has come out, that sees through the system, that walks in obedience, that fears God more than men?

The true people of Jesus Christ:

- are not under Babylon,
- do not fight for Babylon,
- and does not remain silent in the face of Babylon.

They are coming out. They are turning away from the world. They are turning to God's covenant. And they are waiting — actively, pure, prepared — for the King of kings.

“Blessed is he who watches and keeps his clothes, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” Revelation 16:15