

History

Lesson 1 of 4

# **The European Reformation**

Enquiry: What was Luther trying to achieve?

Mr Sellin



# The Catholic Church in Europe

In 1500 (the start of the sixteenth century), nearly everyone in Europe was a Christian. Nearly all churches were part of the **Catholic Church**, the organisation that shared similar beliefs about God and the Bible. These Christians are often called Catholics.

One of the most important things for a Catholic living in the sixteenth century was **salvation**. This meant that, after you died, your soul would go to heaven to live with God for eternity.



# The power of the pope

The Catholic Church was led by the pope, who lived in Rome. Catholics who wanted to gain **salvation** would follow the pope's teachings carefully. This often included 'good works', for example going to church regularly and giving money to the poor.

Popes could also grant **indulgences**, which helped Catholics gain salvation. Some priests within the Church made a lot of money by selling indulgences as an easy way into heaven.



# Reformers in Europe

Many Catholics wanted to **reform** the Church. They were worried that the Church had become less focused on God, and enjoyed having too much money. Some reformers, like Erasmus, wanted the Church to return to how it was run hundreds of years ago, as they believed this was closer to God's wishes. Other reformers, like Wycliffe, wanted the Bible translated into their own language so ordinary people could read it and understand God's commands more clearly.



# Martin Luther

Martin Luther was a German monk and professor of religious studies in Wittenberg, a town in Germany. This meant he was both very devoted to his religious beliefs, and understood religious texts very well. He was not convinced that God's instructions in the Bible were being correctly followed by the Catholic Church. After he returned from a visit to Rome in 1511, he was very bothered about how the Church was run, and began to think about what what could be done to **reform** it.



# Glossary

**Catholic Church:** the organisation made up of nearly every church in Europe in 1500. It was led by the pope and instructed Christians on how to live their lives and get into heaven after death.

**Salvation:** the belief that your soul moves to heaven after you die, to live forever with God.

**Indulgence:** a paper certificate that was granted to help a Catholic to gain salvation.

**Reform:** a change that tries to improve something. Reformers wanted to improve the Catholic Church.



# Comprehension Questions

1. If a Christian achieves salvation, where does their soul go after death?
2. What was an indulgence?
3. Give an example of a reform (a change) that some Christians wanted.
4. Why was Martin Luther **concerned** about the Catholic Church?

**When you're ready, return to the video to check your answers.**

