

**“Luther Made Doctor”**  
**1512 + 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary + 2012**  
**Reformation Countdown Commemorative Medallion**  
**(4<sup>th</sup> in the series of nine scheduled entries, sponsored by ALPB)**

As we continue the “Countdown” to the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation (1517-2017), this year marks the Quincentennial of Martin Luther made Doctor of Divinity. The year 1512 placed Luther in Wittenberg, Germany. A couple of simple observations: Luther was sent to teach in Wittenberg by his Augustinian “father confessor” John Staupitz. This was not Luther’s personal goal, but Staupitz saw something in Luther and acted on it.

Elector Frederick III (the Wise) was attempting to draw dynamic professors to his young University. Luther was a bit of a chance but proved to surpass the German prince’s broadest ambitions. As Luther’s “brothers” recognized his gifts of teaching, they urged him to pursue a Doctorate. Luther protested such based on his youth and ill health. Finally, with much pomp and ceremony on Oct. 18, 1512, the degree of Doctor was bestowed on the 29 year old Luther. Luther later stated, “I, Dr. Martin, was called and actually forced to take the degree of Doctor of Divinity. I had no choice in the matter, but simply had to obey orders. And I had to swear and vow allegiance to my beloved Holy Bible, to preach it faithfully and purely.”

In spite of his new status, Luther still did not have a clear grasp of the saving Gospel message of Jesus Christ, however, this action in 1512 set him on the course that would lead him to the study of God’s Word (Rom. 10:17) and especially a lecture series on Romans. This would ultimately, five years later (1517), inspire those “Hammer Blows Heard ‘Round the World”!

The obverse of this commemorative medallion displays Dr. Martin Luther sporting his academic doctoral cap. This portrait is from Lucas Cranach the Elder. The tower of the castle church associated with the Wittenberg University appears in the background, reminding us of the bells that joyously rung the day Luther received his doctoral degree and upon whose very door Luther would nail his 95 Theses five years later.

[original artwork: ink drawing by Pastor Blazek based on an illustration appearing in “The Great Reformer” by W. Wegener, CPH 1917, “Luther Made Doctor” Copyright© 2012 Scott R. Blazek]



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