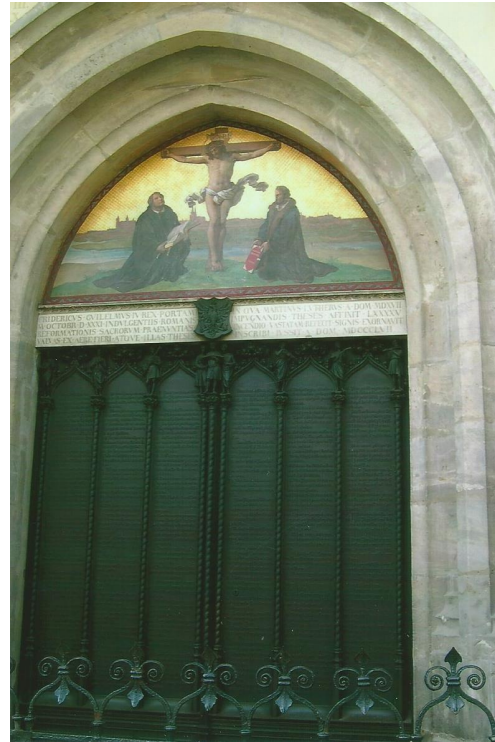


## LutherFacts #19

The time had arrived. By the fall of 1517, Martin Luther was ready to challenge the medieval church, particularly the Pope, over the selling of indulgences. His lectures on Romans and Ephesians, enriched by the use of original Greek sources, had readied him for this effort. On October 31, Luther took the bold step of proposing a debate of 95 statements and questions that focused primarily on the Pope authorizing the sale of indulgences—defined as a monetary gift to compensate for an individual's sins—to raise funds for the church. How the 95 theses were made public, however, remains a matter of inquiry. Was it as his close friend Philip Melanchthon described, on the front door of the Wittenberg Chapel, using a hammer and nails? That graphic telling created, over time, the iconic image for what had



happened. Most historians find little evidence to support that version. They note more likely that it was Luther's letter written on the same day to the Archbishop of Mainz along with a copy of the theses that sparked what came next. Other scholars speculate that Luther contacted the Archbishop while simultaneously placing a copy of the theses on the chapel door. Any of these versions could explain why, the coming weeks, news of the 95 theses rapidly spread throughout Germany and abroad. Whatever the actual scenario, this fact endures: on a fateful day in October, Martin Luther chose to act and as a result the Protestant Reformation was launched.