

United: *Reformed According to Scripture*

Class Three | September 13, 2026

THE GREAT QUESTION: Will the church reform according to Scripture—or will it stop short?

I. THE WORD OF GOD AND THE BEGINNING OF REFORMATION

- 1517 Luther Posts the Ninety-Five Theses** — Luther's challenge helps ignite the Protestant Reformation. At its heart, the movement is a return to the authority of Scripture.
- 1521 The Diet of Worms** — Luther appears before the Diet and is later taken to Wartburg Castle, where he begins translating the New Testament into German.
- 1522-26 The Bible Comes to the People** — Luther completes a German New Testament, and William Tyndale completes an English New Testament. Reformation advances as ordinary people gain access to God's Word.

II. THE ENGLISH QUESTION: WHO HAS AUTHORITY?

- 1534 Henry VIII and the Church of England** — Henry is declared 'Supreme Head of the Church in England.' Breaking with Rome raises a new question: By what authority will the church now be governed?
- 1536 Calvin Arrives in Geneva** — Calvin's concern is comprehensive Reformation—not merely salvation, but also the sacraments, church government, and especially worship, all according to God's Word.
- 1538 The Dissolution of the Monasteries** — The dissolution of England's monasteries weakens institutions that had long served Roman Catholic life and practice.

III. HOW THOROUGHLY WILL THE CHURCH BE REFORMED?

- 1547 Edward VI and Further Reformation** — England moves toward more substantial Protestant reform: worship in English, clergy permitted to marry, images removed, and both bread and wine given in the Lord's Supper.
- 1553-58 Mary Restores Roman Catholicism** — Mary reverses Protestant reforms and persecutes Protestant leaders. The reversal demonstrates how fragile Reformation can be when it depends primarily upon political power.
- 1558 Elizabeth I and the 'Middle Way'** — Elizabeth establishes a moderate Protestant settlement, retaining aspects of Catholic worship and episcopal hierarchy. The enduring question becomes: How much should Scripture dictate the life of the church?
- 1559 The Thirty-Nine Articles and Puritanism** — England is clearly Protestant, yet many believe the Reformation has stopped short. The Puritans increasingly call for the church to be more thoroughly reformed according to the Word of God.

- 1560 The Scottish Reformation** — Scotland becomes officially Reformed. The Scots Confession is written, and the Scottish church seeks to reform doctrine, government, and worship according to Scripture.

IV. THE STRUGGLE FOR FURTHER REFORMATION

- 1603 James VI Becomes James I of England** — The Puritans present the Millenary Petition. Once again the question is whether the church will continue to reform according to Scripture or be restrained by established traditions.
- 1633 William Laud Becomes Archbishop** — Laud promotes greater uniformity and High Church practices, intensifying conflict over the authority governing the church's worship.
- 1637 The Prayer Book Riot in Edinburgh** — The attempt to impose the Prayer Book sparks opposition in Scotland. At the heart of the conflict is a fundamental question: Who has authority to determine how the church worships?
- 1638-42 Scotland and England Move Toward War** — Religious and political questions become deeply intertwined as conflict between Scotland, Charles I, and Parliament escalates into civil war.

V. COVENANT AND CONFESSION

- 1643 The Solemn League and Covenant** — Scotland and England enter a covenant for the preservation and advancement of the Reformed faith.
- 1643-49 The Westminster Assembly** — The Assembly addresses doctrine, church government, worship, and Christian instruction, producing a statement on polity, the Directory for Public Worship, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

THE GREAT PRINCIPLE OF REFORMATION:

The Church Reformed and Always Reforming