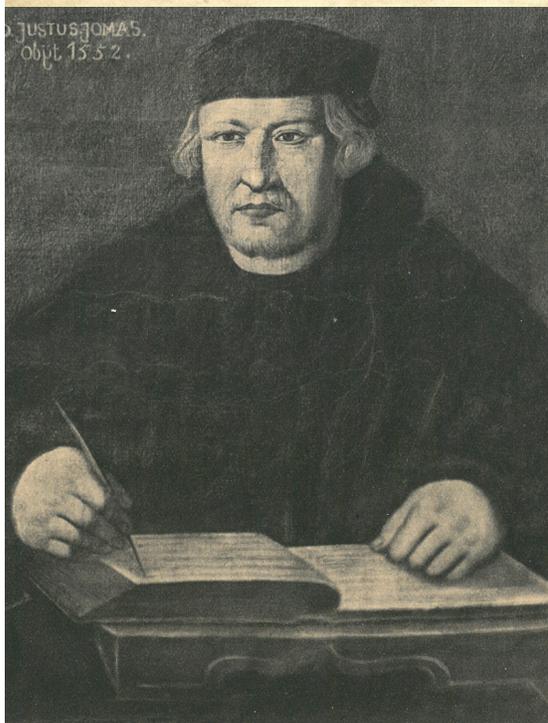


## FACES OF THE REFORMATION

### JUSTUS JONAS

**Born:** June 5, 1493 | Nordhausen, Germany

**Died:** Oct. 9, 1555 | Eisfeld, Germany



REFORMATION  
2017 It's *Still* All About  
**Jesus**

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## Faithful teacher of God's Word and Martin Luther's closest friend

**A TEACHER OF GOD'S WORD:** this was the life's work of Justus Jonas. He is not famous for prolific writing, nor does history remember him as a great leader, swaying the masses. He was, instead, Martin Luther's closest friend and colleague. He shared Luther's fiery personality and possessed a strong command of Greek, Hebrew and Latin. His translation skills and ability to think theologically made him a unique combination of Luther and Philipp Melancthon.

While teaching at the University of Erfurt (1519–1521), Jonas began to correspond with Luther through a mutual friend, John Lange. Lange followed Luther while Jonas was a devotee of Erasmus of Rotterdam, the great Humanist philosopher. At the beginning of the Reformation, the two sides were in agreement that the church needed to be reformed. Erasmus was more interested in a gradual reform focused on changing the atmosphere of moral decay in the church, while Luther was adamant that the focus be centered on the immediate need to preach the Gospel in its purity. Jonas was won over by Luther's theology, much to Erasmus' consternation at having lost such an able disciple.

Jonas literally began to follow Luther as the reformer traveled through Erfurt on his way to the Diet of Worms in 1521. Frederick the Wise had suggested that Jonas, who held a doctorate in canon and civil law, might be a good counselor for Luther at Worms.

Shortly after the Diet ended, Jonas left the University of Erfurt to join the faculty at the University of Wittenberg, but he was hired as a teacher of law. In a letter to Frederick the Wise, he asked to be relieved of these duties to be free instead to teach God's Word at the university. The Gospel had fully captivated his heart and mind and it could belong to no other discipline. A few months later, Jonas was granted a doctorate in theology.

Jonas shared Luther's strong resolve and steadied Melancthon in Luther's absence at the Diet of Augsburg, as well as during Luther's exile at the Wartburg. These three men were close both professionally and personally, but it was Jonas who was Luther's closest companion. He was at Luther's side when he stood up to the Emperor at Worms, he was one of the few witnesses to Luther's marriage, and he was at Luther's bedside as the reformer took his last breath in 1546.

The framework of the church underwent a seismic shift because of the Reformation. Both bread and wine were now given at Communion. Priests could marry. Parishes were no longer dependent on the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Jonas' abilities to organize and think logically about these and other reforms, along with his gifted preaching and teaching skills, were used mightily by God to assist churches during this time of transition. His dedication to the cause of the Reformation never wavered — even when he was forced to become a wandering preacher from 1546 until his death in 1555 — because of Jonas' faithfulness to the gracious Christ rediscovered by Luther in the Holy Bible.

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