

CHAPTER 11

The Cost of the Crusades

Whenever there is a war there is also a cost. Fighting is never cheap. Men must pay a great price which includes hardship, suffering and sometimes loss of life or limb. It cost something for thousands of Americans to go to war (in each of our nation's wars) and our brave soldiers paid a dear price. We remember their sacrifice each year on Memorial Day. As a result of what they did for us, we still live in a free country. They bought our freedom with their blood. They laid down their lives for a WORTHY CAUSE (compare John 15:13). It cost much to win and preserve our freedom.

In today's lesson we are going to learn about another series of wars that were fought almost a thousand years ago. These wars are called THE CRUSADES. The Crusades also COST the LOSS of many lives. Thousands and thousands of people were killed for A CAUSE. Was it worth the cost? Were the Crusades successful? Was there a favorable outcome? Was anything worthwhile and lasting accomplished? If you went to the store and paid \$10,000.00, you would expect to get something in return! You paid a great price and you should get something very valuable in return. The crusaders paid a great price, but they got very little in return. Let's learn about the tragedy of the Crusades.

The Holy City

The Church had its beginning in the East. The Church began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts chapter 2) in the Eastern city of Jerusalem, the city where Christ was crucified, buried and rose again. From the East the Church expanded into the West. The Apostle Paul played an important part in bringing the gospel into Europe and Rome and other western areas.

As we learned in the last chapter (POPES AND ROPES), Rome (a Western city) became a very important city and the bishop of Rome eventually became the Pope. In the year 1054 A.D. an important event took place. The Church was DIVIDED into two parts: the GREEK CHURCH in the EAST and the LATIN CHURCH (ROMAN CHURCH) in the WEST.

The Eastern Church, whose capital was Constantinople, suffered because of this split with the Western Church. The Eastern Church also encountered another major problem: Thousands of its people were conquered by MOHAMMEDANISM.

Let's learn a little about MOHAMMEDANISM. Around 570 A.D. a man named Muhammad was born in the city of Mecca in Arabia. He came to believe strongly in ONE GOD (named ALLAH) and he rejected the idolatry and polytheism (belief in MANY gods) which was all around him. At age 40 Muhammad began to receive what he believed were visions or messages or revelations from God. These were written down into a book which today is called the KORAN.

MOHAMMEDANS are the followers of Muhammad. They are also called Muslims. (Their religion is called ISLAM.) Although Muslims believe strongly in ONE GOD (even as Christians

do), but the God they worship (Allah) is very different than the God described in the Bible. Muslims do not believe that Jesus Christ is God and they do not believe in the Trinity. In fact, they do not believe that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead. Muslims do not even believe Jesus was crucified. Many believe Judas was crucified in His place. Some, however, believe it was Christ on the cross but that He did not die. They believe that Jesus was a sinless prophet although not as great as the prophet Muhammad. Even today MOHAMMEDANISM is the second largest religion in the world. There are an estimated 1.3 billion people in the world who are Muslims (as compared to 2.1 billion people in the world who claim to be Christians). [These figures were given in 2005]. Over fifty countries have Muslim-majority populations. Within 100 years of the death of Muhammad, the Muslim Empire stretched from Southern France through Spain, North Africa, Central Asia to the confines of China.

How did the Muslims conquer so much territory in so little time? The answer is very simple. The Muslims were a very warlike people. They would go to war against anyone who did not believe as they did. They would gladly die for the cause of their god (Allah). These people were told that the greatest honor belonged to the man who would die in battle. He would go straight to heaven. These people are fanatical in their belief and in the practice of their religion. Even today some of the most difficult countries for missionaries to reach with the gospel are countries which are controlled by Muslims.

With this background, let's go back to our story. The Greek Eastern Church was being threatened by the Muslim invasions. The Muslim or Mohammedan Arabs had already taken away from the Eastern empire the provinces of Syria, Palestine, Egypt and North Africa. In fact, the Muslims were the ones who destroyed the greatest and largest library in the ancient world--the library located in the city of Alexandria in Egypt. These books would have been of great value to historians, but they are lost forever. The Eastern part of the empire began asking the Western part of the empire to help them stop the Mohammedans from conquering any more territory. They were even afraid that the Muslims might overtake the capital city of Constantinople.

The people in the West were not overly concerned about helping those in the East, but they were very much concerned about something else. Christians in the West loved to make pilgrimages to the Holy Land and especially to the city of Jerusalem. This was part of their "religion". They actually worshipped relics and holy places. A relic is an object that is highly esteemed and even worshipped because it was once associated with someone very important. For example, a piece of wood from the cross upon which Christ died would be considered a relic. One of the nails that was driven into the hands or feet of Christ would also be a valuable relic. Some religious person might say, "This is so important. This is actually the very nail that was used to nail Christ to the cross. Just seeing and touching this nail makes me feel closer to God!" Is this true? Does the Bible tell us anywhere that we are to worship such relics? A long time ago Moses made a snake out of metal and put it on a pole (see Numbers chapter 21). Did this metal snake later become worshipped as a relic (see 2 Kings 18:4)? _____ Is such worship pleasing to God? _____ Why or why not?

For many years the Holy Land had been under the control of the Arabs. These Arabs were Mohammedans but they did not mind having people from the West come and visit the Holy Land. The Christian pilgrims seemed to get along very well with the Arabs. The attitude of the Arabs toward the pilgrims was much the same as that of today's resort owners toward tourists. The Arabs did a very profitable business with the pilgrims. They allowed the pilgrims to enjoy the sights and they enjoyed the pilgrims' money!

In the year 1071 a change took place. This is when the Seljuk Turks took the Holy Land away

from the Arabs. These Turks were also Mohammedans but they were even more fanatical than the Arabs. They hated the Christians **because they were Christians**. They would have nothing to do with the Pilgrims. They did not even want their money. They made it very difficult for them to visit the holy places (the pilgrims would always want to visit Bethlehem where Christ was born and Jerusalem where Christ died and rose again; they would enjoy bathing in the Jordan River, etc.). The Turks treated them very badly. When the pilgrims returned home to the west they told others about the mistreatment they had received at the hands of the Turks. The people were saddened that people who did not even believe in Christ had full control of the Holy Land and were making it very difficult for Christians even to visit there.

The First Crusade

The man who initiated (started) the first Crusade was Pope Urban II. He was pope from 1088 to 1099 A.D. Urban was tall and handsome and impressive. He was also a great orator or speaker. He knew how to speak to massive crowds and stir them up to action.

In the fall of 1095 Pope Urban II went to the city of Clermont in France. He let it be known that he was going to speak about the Holy Land and the Turks. A large crowd gathered, eager to hear what he would say. His powerful and eloquent voice held the multitude spellbound. He gave a forceful and fiery sermon. Some believe that this was the most effective sermon ever preached in the history of the world, as far as getting listeners to do what the speaker wanted them to do.

He spoke to the people about the birth of Jesus and how the Lord grew up and went up and down the Holy Land teaching and doing good. He made them see the arrest of Jesus, His crucifixion, death, and burial. With much feeling he spoke of all the scenes and places in the Holy Land which he said became sacred because the Saviour once walked there. He then told how the TURKS had ruined some of these holy places and how they had mistreated so many of the pilgrims. The huge crowd began to boil with anger.

Here is part of his speech: "From the confines of Jerusalem and from the city of Constantinople a horrible tale has gone forth... an accursed race, a race utterly alienated from God has invaded the lands of those Christians and depopulated them by the sword, plundering, and fire...O most valiant soldiers...Start upon the road to the Holy Sepulcher (the tomb where Christ was said to have been buried), to tear that land from the wicked race and subject it to yourselves."

Pope Urban thus called upon the people to go to the Holy Land and rescue Jerusalem and the tomb of Christ from the hands of the Turks. He also provided a great incentive (reward) for all that would go. He told them that they would have a greatly reduced time in PURGATORY. Have you ever read about PURGATORY in the Bible? _____ Purgatory is an imaginary place of suffering and punishment, where the Catholics believe souls must go to be purified before they can enter heaven. Urban promised them that their suffering in the next life would be lessened if they would go to battle against the Turks. Urban also promised that all who would die in the war against the Turks would go straight to heaven! Urban thus gave the people a new way to earn salvation.

The Bible says:	" _____ on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be _____ (Acts 16:31)
Urban said:	"Go to battle against the Turks and thou shalt be saved, especially if you die!"

Was Urban preaching a true gospel or a false gospel? _____

What does the Bible tell us about those who preach a FALSE GOSPEL (Galatians 1:8-9)?
 _____ Urban may have been a powerful and effective preacher, but he had one major problem: HE DID NOT PREACH THE TRUTH!

When he finished this message the multitudes went wild. A cry was heard, "GOD WILLS IT! GOD WILLS IT!" The people were convinced that this was what God wanted them to do. Do you think this was really God's will? The people thought that God would really be behind this crusade and that they were fighting in His Name. They thought they had a GREAT CAUSE: to rescue the Holy Land from the ungodly Turks. To them this was a HOLY WAR and many thought that God would be very pleased.

Pope Urban suggested that red cloth be cut up into strips and that every soldier wear the sign of the cross on his clothing, on the sleeves or on the breast. The Latin word for "cross" is **crux** (compare the word "crucifix"). This is why the undertaking was called a "CRUSADE" and the soldiers were called "CRUSADERS."

Many thousands of people took part in this first Crusade. All of Europe seemed to be united around a common cause and all kinds of people volunteered to take it in the crusade. The priest forsook his monastery cell; the peasant left his plough to join the fight against the Turks. Some of the best and most famous men in Europe joined the Crusade and also some of the worst (such as thieves, murderers and scoundrels of all sorts). Pope Urban II encouraged them all with these words: "You are soldiers of the cross. Wear on your breasts or shoulders the blood-red sign of the cross. Wear it as a token that His help will never fail you, as the pledge of a vow never to be recalled." The Pope seemed convinced that it was the will of God and that God would fight for His people!

The first Crusade resulted in much loss of life not only from the battles but from the difficulties of the journey. For example, at times conditions became so bad that the Crusaders had to eat horse flesh, camels, dogs and mice and even worse. The sufferings from thirst were even greater than the sufferings from hunger. These men paid a price and it COST many lives. Finally in 1099 the Crusaders were able to regain the city of Jerusalem and control it once again. But this apparent success did not last for long.

Other Crusades

The Muslim Turks may have lost a battle but they had not yet lost the war. The Crusaders were only able to keep Jerusalem out of the hands of their enemies for a short time. In 1187 Jerusalem was captured by Saladin, an Egyptian ruler. This inspired a third Crusade. The Christians again hoped to re-capture the Holy City. One of the leaders of this Crusade was Richard I, known as Richard the Lion-Hearted. He was a muscular, powerful man with great fighting skill and ability. Does God want believers to be "lionhearted" (see Proverbs 28:1)? _____

Richard I was brave, strong and courageous, but his Crusaders were not able to re-capture the city of Jerusalem. The only thing Richard could do was to gain a treaty with Saladin that gave Christians permission to visit the Holy Land.

There were other Crusades as well. Most historians say there were about eight Crusades over a period of more than 200 years. There was also a CHILDREN'S CRUSADE which is one of the saddest incidents in all of history. This crusade was led by Stephen, a shepherd lad of only twelve years old. He lived in France. As the story goes he had a vision in which Christ appeared to him and told him to rescue the holy places. As he told about this vision other children gathered around him. This army increased until there were 30,000 children, girls as well as boys, most of them were less than twelve years old. Questioned as to where they were going, they replied, "We go to God, and seek for the holy cross beyond the sea." In Germany there was another Children's Crusade led by a child leader by the name of Nicholas. He led a band of 20,000 children. Nicholas was only ten years old at this time. Children joined up with him and along with the boys and girls went men and women, good and bad. Thousands died because of hardship and difficult journeys. Some continued to march through Italy. The fate of the French children was especially tragic. At Marseilles they fell a prey to two slave dealers who offered to take them across the Mediterranean. Seven vessels set sail. Two were shipwrecked on the little island of San Pietro. The rest reached the African shore, where the children were sold into slavery.

None of the Crusades were successful for any length of time. They conquered Jerusalem in 1099, lost it in 1187, re-conquered it in 1229 and lost it again in 1244. It remained in the possession of the Turks from that time on. In fact, it was not until the First World War (1917) that the English took Palestine away from the Turks.

The Crusades died out by the middle of the 1200's, but even after this there were strong feelings that the Holy Land should be regained. Christopher Columbus signed an agreement on April 17, 1492 to devote the proceeds of his undertaking beyond the Western seas to the recovery of the holy sepulchre (the tomb where Christ was thought to have been buried). Before his fourth and last journey to America he wrote to Alexander VI and renewed his vow to furnish troops for the rescue of that sacred locality.

Lessons From The Crusades

One of the great values of history is to learn from the mistakes of the past. There are some valuable lessons we should learn from the Crusades. Let's consider some of these:

1) Beware of misguided ENTHUSIASM!

The Crusaders were very enthusiastic! They were all excited about rescuing the Holy Land from the Turks. Urban's great speech really roused them and got them all "fired up." The problem is that they were all excited and enthused about the wrong thing.

God was not all upset that the Holy Land was under the control of the Turks. God heart was grieved at some more important matters. God was grieved that so many Christians had left the truths of the Bible and did not even understand the simple truths about salvation. God was grieved that the people were so wrapped up in the worship of relics and Holy places. They gave more respect and honor to a piece of wood (that was supposed to have been from the cross) then

they gave to God and His Word. God was not overly upset with the Turks. He was grieved with those who claimed to be Christians and did not resemble Jesus Christ. The real battle should not have been against the Turks. The real battle should have been against all of the error and false teaching that had crept into the church.

Today people get all excited about many things. What are some of the things people get enthused about today? Do some people get all excited about the WRONG THINGS?

What are the inhabitants of heaven all excited about (Luke 15:7,10)?

_____ Are you excited about this also? What was the Apostle John joyous about (3 John 3-4)?

_____ Are you excited about this also? _____
The Crusaders were all passionate about killing Turks. They should have been all passionate about sharing the gospel with these Turks and seeing some of them come to know the Saviour and walk in the truth of God's Word.

2) Beware of misguided SINCERITY!

Many of the crusaders were very SINCERE in what they were doing. They had a sincere desire to recapture the holy land and they thought they were doing this for God.

It is important to be sincere, but IT IS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT TO BE RIGHT! It is possible to be sincere but very wrong (like the Crusaders). It is possible to sincerely think you are headed on a road going to New York when you are really lost and on a road headed for Chicago!

People may be sincere in their religious beliefs but this does not make their beliefs right. People may be sincere Catholics, sincere Mormons, sincere Jehovah's Witnesses, etc. These people may really believe that they are serving God and doing what is right. But if their beliefs do not agree with the Bible, THEY ARE TOTALLY WRONG, no matter how sincere they might be.

3) Beware of a ZEAL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE!

The Crusaders had a great ZEAL and FERVOR. They were very devoted to their cause and they were even willing to die for their cause (and thousands did!). Zeal is a wonderful thing and we need to have it, but zeal without knowledge is very dangerous. A surgeon may have a great zeal to do operations (he is all excited about performing an operation) but he also has the KNOWLEDGE and skill to do the surgery in the right way. Suppose there was a person who had a great ZEAL to operate on people but no knowledge. Would you want him to operate on you? In Romans 10:2 Paul wrote about the Jews of his day. Did they have a great zeal? Did they have the right kind of zeal?

Paul was once a Jew just like them. What did he do with his great ZEAL (Phil. 3:6)?

_____ He went about harming and hurting every believer he could find! Later Paul was saved (Saul the persecutor became Paul the Apostle). Why was Paul such a great Apostle and Missionary? He still had the same ZEAL but what else did he now have? _____

The Crusaders could have changed the world for good if they had taken all their zeal and energy and used it in the right way. May God help us to be ZEALOUS, not for the wrong causes, but for God. The Crusaders were ZEALOUS OF EVIL WORKS (killing Turks, etc.). God wants true believers to be " _____ of GOOD _____ " (Titus 2:14).

4) Beware of MOVING WITH THE MOB.

The First Crusade was launched as the result of MOB ACTION. Pope Urban stirred up a mob. A mob is a mass of people. A mass of people does not do much thinking. Everyone follows everyone else. It was a mob of people that crucified Christ.

The Bible says, "Thou shalt not _____ a _____ to do _____" (Exodus 23:2). Very often we do this very thing! Someone might ask us, "Why are you doing that?" Our answer: "Well because everyone else is doing it!" The fact that everyone else is doing it does not make it right. (It usually makes it wrong!) We must follow God's Word, whether the mob does or not! Some day there will be a mob in hell and the few who did not follow the mob will be in heaven (Matthew 7:13-14).

Don't do something just because you see everyone else doing it. Learn a lesson from the Crusaders!

5) People may think they are doing GOD'S WILL when they are not doing it at all!

After the Pope gave his stirring speech the crowd cried out, "GOD WILLS IT! GOD WILLS IT!" Many in this crowd sincerely thought that God's will was to fight the Turks! That was not God's will at all!

Just because something seems like a good idea does not make it God's will. Just because a Pope gets everyone excited about doing something does not make it God's will. Believing that something is God's will does not make it God's will. God's will is determined and found in only one place: THE BIBLE. To find God's will you must go to God's Word, for there and only there has God revealed that which He wants and that which pleases Him. Does the Bible teach us that we should fight against the Turks if they overtake the Holy Land? Does the Bible tell us that we must protect the Holy places in the city of Jerusalem from the heathen? The Crusaders did not get their great idea from the Bible.

Before we get all excited about doing something, let's be sure we go to the Bible to check it out.

6) People may think that God is in something when God is not in it at all!

The Crusaders were convinced that God was behind them and that God would make their Crusade successful. THEY WERE TOTALLY WRONG. The Crusades were a series of great failures. They did not help the cause of Christ; they did much harm to the cause of Christ. When the children of Israel conquered the promised land (see the book of Joshua), God was in it! God gave them amazing victory: "there stood not a _____ of all their _____ before them" (Joshua 21:44). When God really fights for a people there is no doubt about it! God was

not fighting for the Crusaders even though many believed He was. And God was not to blame for the FAILURES OF THE CRUSADERS. It was not God's fault that they lost and failed. They should never have gone to battle in the first place!

Today there are many things that go on in the Name of God, but God is not even in them! (Think of religious TV programs, radio programs, church services, etc.) Many religious people think that God is backing them up and supporting **their cause**, but HE IS NOT. There is only one cause that God supports: HIS OWN!

7) To find Christ today, DON'T GO LOOKING FOR HIM IN JERUSALEM!

If you want to find Christ today, don't go to the empty tomb in Jerusalem (see Luke 24:5 and 6-- "Why do you seek the living among the dead? **He is not here**, but is risen!"). Don't go to the place where Christ was crucified (Golgotha). Don't go to His birthplace in Bethlehem. Don't go to the Jordan River where He was baptized.

If you want to find Christ today, where should you go (Matthew 18:20)?

Even today many Christians think there is something "extra special" about going to the Holy Land. Is this really true? Does going to the Holy Land make a person a "better Christian"? Are believers missing out on something if they are unable to go there? Does the Bible tell us that we will never really grow in the Lord unless we make frequent visits to the Holy Land?

8) Our real zeal should not be for HURTING MOHAMMEDANS but it should be for HELPING MISSIONS!

In the Bible God has told us very clearly what we should do to the TURKS and to the MUSLIMS and to any other non-Christian people. What should we do to these people?

Mark 16:15 _____

Matthew 28:19 _____

Luke 24:47 _____

Did the Crusaders do these things? Instead of trying to WOUND them they should have tried to WIN them!

Today we need to have this same kind of zeal for missions, The Crusaders were willing to sacrifice and pay a price and even lay down their lives for their CAUSE. May we be willing to sacrifice and pay a price and even lay down our lives that lost people might hear the good news of Christ.

9) The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but SPIRITUAL (2 Cor. 10:4).

The Muslims used the sword to spread their religion. How sad and how tragic that Christians followed this same strategy! Jesus taught that "all they that take the _____ shall perish with the _____" (Matthew 26:52). The Crusaders must have never read this verse!

Also they must have never read John 18:36. According to this verse, why do Christ's servants **not** fight?

We are in a spiritual battle and we need spiritual weapons. The TURKS are not the great enemies. The MUSLIMS or the TERRORISTS are not our real foes today. We do not fight against flesh and blood. Who is the real enemy (Ephesians 6:10-17)? _____
What sword must we always use (Eph. 6:17 and Heb. 4:12)? _____

10) Fight the good fight of faith!

As a Christian believer, are you in a battle? Is the battle going on today? Who is the enemy? What is your CAUSE? What does it mean when we sing, "ONWARD CHRISTIANS SOLDIERS MARCHING AS TO WAR, WITH THE CROSS OF JESUS GOING ON BEFORE"? Does this mean that we are to join a modern-day crusade?

How can you be a successful soldier of Christ today? How can you be a WINNER in the battle of life? How can you be "MORE THAN A CONQUEROR" (Romans 8:37)? What are you going to do this coming week for the sake of Christ and His cross? May we be "GOOD SOLDIERS OF _____ " (2 Tim. 2:3)!

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

(2 Cor. 10:4-5)

**Urban II proclaims
the First Crusade**



Illustrations taken from *The Church in History*
by B. K. Kuiper, pages 118-119



Crusaders on the March