

“Church History: Heroes, Heretics & Holy Wars”

Sunday School Notes

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CLASS 8 – The Crusades

Timeline Leading to the Crusades:

400 – Augustine outlines a theory of “Just War” – defensive war to protect is always just; some offensive wars are just, but strict conditions

570 – 632 – Muhammad’s life, starts Islam

The rise of Islam is one of the most incredible movements in history.

638 – Jerusalem is captured by Arabs under Caliph Umar

642 – Islam entered Egypt; it spread easily in Egypt and N. Africa because of the weakness of Christianity there

711- Islam crossed the straight of Gibraltar & entered Spain

732- Battle of Poitiers-Tours; Charles Martel pushed Muslims back to Spain, keeping them out of Europe (his grandson was Charlemagne, who would become the Holy Roman Emperor in Europe). He was seen as the savior of Europe.

841- Islamic forces took down St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome

The Seljuk Turks were Muslims who defeated the Eastern Emperor in Armenia in 1071; then they spread out and conquered -> Jerusalem captured in 1073, Antioch and headed to Constantinople. Alexius II was the Byzantium (Constantinople) emperor who needed to stop them. He recruited Pope Urban II, even though it’s only 40 yrs. after the “Great Schism”, it’s the East government asking for the West church’s help.

In 1095 Pope Urban II went on a preaching tour to call to arms the fighting classes of Western Europe to recover the Holy City of Jerusalem. At the church council at Clermont (a couple hours south of Paris), Urban describes in grotesque detail how the Persian infidels tortured, raped and killed Christians. Then he said they needed to liberate Jerusalem and announced: “Whoever for devotion alone, not to gain honor or money, goes to Jerusalem to liberate the Church of God can substitute this journey for all penance.” Of course, he assures them that “God wills it.”

He promised: -full remission of the penalties of confessed sin,

-church protection of family & property,

-immunity from lawsuits and interest repayments on debts,

-those dying in battle could expect status as martyrs and automatically be granted eternal salvation; later that would be granted to any who just participated.

-the concept of purgatory and indulgences are important to the Reformation, but they’re also important here: thousands of years of purgatory could be cancelled -> a “plenary” or full indulgence is offered.

First Crusade – Rated NC-17 for violence, and for the first Jewish holocaust.

- 1) There was a man named Little Peter who led an army of up to a hundred thousand poor peasants as the first wave of the Crusaders. They didn’t have money or supplies, so they started attacking, killing & looting from Jews in the Rhineland and throughout France, killing possibly up to 10,000 Jews. The peasant army gets totally slaughtered at Civetot.

- 2) The rest of the Christian armies are mostly French, but legitimate knights. A total of @150,000 troops marched from Europe and grouped in Constantinople in early 1097. Made their way with a few fights down to Jerusalem in early 1099; they win their first battle with the Turks in Nicea, which is just to the east of Constantinople, then Antioch. Less than 20,000 arrive in Jerusalem. Final assault and massacre was June and July 1099, with success on July 15, 1099. The crusaders completely slaughtered all Muslim men, women & children, as well as Jews – 70,000 corpses.

“Crusade” comes from a French word meaning “the way of the cross.” They used the cross on their banners as a symbol of the church. Ironic, since the cross was Christ’s giving Himself up sacrificially to be killed by His enemies so that people would be saved, using it to declare war and march under the banners to kill unbelievers.

Second Crusade – 1144 Muslim Turkish warlord Zengi captured Edessa, massacring the Frankish inhabitants. Pope Eugenius III launched new crusade; Bernard of Clairvaux preached it up. Failures all around with Germans, French, Portuguese all beaten in Asia Minor 1147, then in Damascus 1148.

Third Crusade - 1187 – Saladin & Muslims retake Jerusalem; the concept of *jihad*, war against infidels, is more forcefully being advanced by Muslims. Frederick Barbossa, the king of Germany and the Holy Roman Emperor took 100,000 men to fight them in 1189, but drowned on the way there! His army disintegrated. Richard I (the Lion-Hearted of Robin Hood fame) of England (with most of Phillip II of France’s men) heads over in 1190, took Acre and killed hundreds of Muslims prisoners, then went to Jerusalem. There was a 2 year standoff as Richard wouldn’t attack and Saladin wouldn’t relent. Finally they signed the Treaty of Jaffa in Sept. 1192, allowed access to Jerusalem for pilgrims. Richard left, Saladin died 6 months later. Christians fail to take Jerusalem.

Fourth Crusade – Totally unsuccessful; 1200-1204 Pope Innocent III called for 4th Crusade; many French nobles responded and targeted Egypt for attack; but they couldn’t pay for the expedition. Made a deal with Venice to capture a port in Damascus held by Christians in exchange for using their ships. Ended up getting sidetracked helping young Alexius fight his uncle, the king of Byzantium; attacked Constantinople in 1204 and looted the city (art & literature destroyed). Fighting Christians instead of Muslims! Innocent excommunicated everyone involved.

1212- The Children’s Crusade begins. Hard to know what is fact and what is fiction; apparently a boy had visions of unbelievers turning to Jesus, gathered 30,000 children to go to Jerusalem, went to the Mediterranean Sea thinking it would part. It did not, the children were sold into slavery. But more likely this Crusade was two armies of all ages.

Fifth Crusade – German, Italian and British forces attacked Egypt from 1217-1221. Repelled.

(some call the 6th Crusade the 5th and don’t count the 5th.)

Sixth Crusade – 1228-1229 – Frederick II (Emperor) sailed to Jerusalem in 1228, agreed to a treaty that allowed the city to be open to all, the Temple Mount in Islamic hands. Pope Gregory IX excommunicated him for his compromise. It was Christian until 1244. Then captured and remained Muslim until 1917.

Seventh Crusade was Louis IX with 15,000 men to capture Egypt in 1248-54, but was badly defeated.

Eighth Crusade – 1270 – Louis IX died in Egypt; canonized a saint- St. Louis. (and you thought the Last Crusade was Indiana Jones...)

Bruce Shelly: “If the primary purposes of the Crusades were to win the Holy Land, to check the advance of Islam, and to heal the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches, then the Crusades failed miserably.”

Scriptures:

Psalm 110:5-6; Ephesians 6:11-17 (Armor of God)

Romans 12:14, 17-19

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

The kingdom advances far more powerfully through the humble martyr’s death than through the soldier fighting. We don’t kill for the kingdom, we die for it!

Sources Used:

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