

# Life Notes

## THE HISTORY OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

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### #13. Summary of The Church in the Twelfth Century

Few events in church history are as controversial as The Crusades. On one hand, the goal was to push back the rise of Islam and militarily re-take Jerusalem and the Holy Land of ancient Israel. On the other hand, many historians believe the action was incited by misguided religious leaders as well as various kingdoms of the west. It is difficult to ascertain the intentions of anyone's heart, especially when nearly 1,000 years have passed. I think it is clear that some of the Crusaders felt they were engaged in a truly righteous cause. Others were no doubt motivated by possible spoils of war and the lure of adventure. We will have to wait for later chapters to discuss the Crusades in detail, but we need to understand that the Crusaders fought over a period of about 200 years (1096-1270).

First, a word about Jerusalem. Jerusalem was largely destroyed in 70 AD after a three and one-half year siege by the Roman army under the command of General Titus. A final Jewish rebellion (the Bar Kochba Revolt) occurred from 132-135 AD, and resulted in the loss of Israel's national identity. Both Jews and Christians were forbidden to enter the remains of Jerusalem except for one day a year until the 7th century. Christians were granted an exemption under Constantine in the 4th century, and the city had a largely Christian population for a while. By the late 7th century, Jerusalem was under Arab control, and remained so for about 400 years. This set the stage for the First Crusade.

There were 8 numbered Crusades, and one named.

First Crusade-1096-1099

The Second Crusade-1147-1149

The Third Crusade-1189-1192

The Fourth Crusade-1201-1204

The Children's Crusade in 1212

The Fifth Crusade-1217-1221

The Sixth Crusade-1228-1229

The Seventh Crusade-1248-1254

The Eighth Crusade-1270

When the first crusaders left Europe, they called themselves "Pilgrims" and wore large red cloth crosses. The Latin word "crux" (cross) would eventually give rise to the name "Crusades," but not until the 17th century. It is estimated that as many as 250,000 died during the crusades, though many place the number much higher.

While the verdict of history remains undecided, a case can be made that the Crusades were, at the least, an effort to fight a spiritual battle with fleshly weapons. The Christians justified the killings of non-Christians to a degree thought barbaric today, yet they felt vindicated because they were responding to similar Islamic barbarity. Eastern Christians as well as Jews also fell victim to the warfare.

Like many wars, there are stories of heroism, patriotism, and even religious magnificence. Yet there were days of profound cruelty as well. Later we will spend several chapters working through the story to form credible conclusions, but by any standard the Crusades, justified or not, were a dark time for Europe and the Middle East.

However, as we have seen, God is at work even in the most difficult of times. During the 12th century, the Waldensian Movement, led by Peter Waldo, was setting the stage for the growing fervor of "pure religion" that would help fuel the Reformation in a few generations. Though Waldo's followers would be banned in 1184 and endured centuries of persecution, the march toward the great revival continued.

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