

The Crusades

The Rise of the Papacy

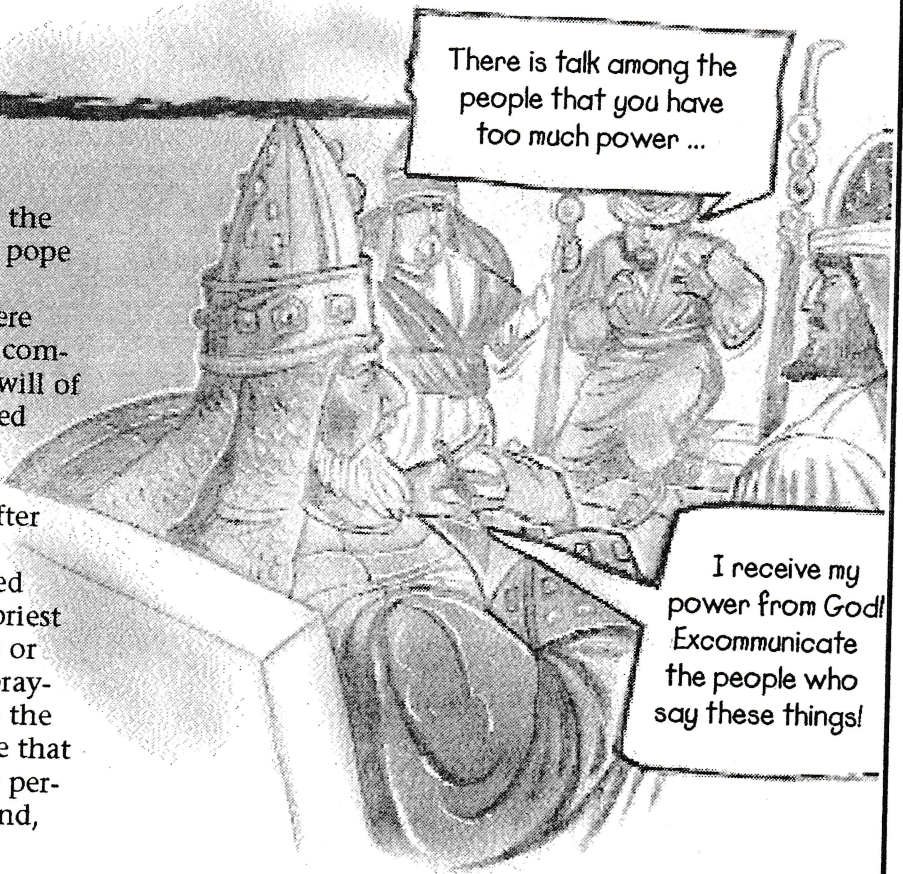
By the middle of the ninth century, the pope had gained political strength. The pope had to approve every decision made by church councils. Kings and emperors were enthroned and dethroned at the pope's command. Anyone who disagreed with the will of the pope was excommunicated (dismissed from the church).

Many false doctrines surfaced in the church during this time. For example, after listening to private confessions, priests assigned parishioners various works called *penance*. Works of penance showed the priest that the Christian was truly sorry for his or her sins. These works included fasting, praying the rosary, and taking pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Christians were led to believe that if they could walk where Jesus walked or perhaps bring back a relic from the Holy Land, all of their sins would be forgiven.

The church also taught about a place called *purgatory*. According to this teaching, when Christians die, they must spend a period of intense suffering in purgatory before entering heaven. Works of penance were said to shorten the time a person must spend in purgatory. If a person died on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, it was believed that he entered heaven immediately, without having to suffer the agony of purgatory. For these reasons, thousands of people traveled on pilgrimages each year.

A New Religion Grows in the Mideast

In the seventh century, a man named Muhammad, who claimed to be a prophet of God, founded the teaching of Islam in the Mideast. This teaching became a religion based on a combination of Christianity and Muhammad's own beliefs. Muhammad claimed to have received a revelation from the angel Gabriel, which was recorded in a book called the Qur'an. Muhammad taught five main duties to gain salvation, one of



which was to profess faith in Allah alone, the God he proclaimed. *Islam* means "peace" and Muhammad taught his followers (or Muslims) to live in peace unless they felt their faith was threatened, in which case they should fight. Muhammad also taught that it is the Muslims' duty to profess Allah to everyone they meet. So effective was this approach that within two years after the death of Muhammad, all of Arabia fell under the control of this new religion.

Within a century, Islam had spread throughout northern Africa and into Spain. The Muslim governor of Spain marched into France in 732, but was defeated at Tours by Charles Martel, the grandfather of Charlemagne. This battle stopped the spread of Islam into Europe.

Crusades for the Cause

For many years the Arab rulers of the Holy Land allowed Christian pilgrims to visit Jerusalem to retrace Jesus' steps. By 1070, the

Seljuk Turks, who practiced Islam, began to attack, capture, and even kill pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land. This action threatened Christians who believed that their salvation would be helped by traveling to Jerusalem.

In response, in 1095, Pope Urban II held a special council at Clermont, France, where he asked Christian knights and nobles to join a holy Crusade to drive the Turks out of the Holy Land. Urban II is quoted as saying, "God wills it. We must drive the heathen Muslims from Jerusalem and from the whole land where our Savior lived." Thus, "God wills it" became the battle cry for the Christian Crusaders.

God Wills It

Soldiers came by the thousands. Soon an army of 300,000 set out for the battle they believed God would surely bless. Each soldier wore a red cross as a uniform badge. These Crusaders took Nicaea in 1097 and Antioch in Syria in 1098. But because of war, sickness, and other causes, only 20,000 men reached Jerusalem in 1099. Godfrey of Bouillon led the battle at Jerusalem. He built three assault towers to get over the walls and finally entered and captured the city.

A second Crusade began. The church expected to drive the Muslims out of the entire region of the Holy Land. This did not happen. The Muslims, led by Saladin, crushed the Crusaders and regained Jerusalem in 1187.

A third Crusade, led by Richard I (the Lionhearted) of England, Philip Augustus of France, and Frederick I of Germany, also failed to recapture Jerusalem. But when the fighting was over, Saladin generously gave permission for Christians once again to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

In all, eight Crusades were undertaken between 1095 and 1270. The goal of each was to retake Jerusalem from the Muslims. After 175 years of trying to regain the Holy Land, almost five million Christians had died. Despite the sacrifice of so many lives, not one part of what was seized in the first Crusade remained in the hands of the Christians.

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Did You Know?

The word *crusade* comes from a Latin word that means "cross."

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Onward Christian Soldiers

1. The Crusades had widespread and far-reaching outcomes for both the church and the world. Following are listed several of these outcomes. Read each one and decide if it was good or bad for God's kingdom. Write *G* for good or *B* for bad. Be ready to give reasons for your opinions.
 - G** a. Christians from all over Europe got together to share feelings and ideas.
 - G** b. In the countries from which many martyred nobles came, the national governments grew stronger than ever.
 - G** c. A middle class made up of merchants, bankers, and craftsmen grew up within cities to support the efforts of the Crusades.
 - B** d. The pope gained absolute power over the kings of Europe, including the right to tax.
 - G/B** e. Pastors, trying to talk their people into joining the Crusades, learned to make their sermons appeal to the common people.
 - B** f. The church taught that sinners could buy forgiveness by contributing money.
 - G** g. People began to suspect and question whether or not the pope was handling his unlimited power well.
2. What do you think of the Crusaders' slogan, "God wills it"?

[Answers will vary. God's will is revealed to us in Scripture.]

3. How could God allow the forces of Islam to overcome those who marched under the banner of the cross?

[God sometimes allows His people to suffer persecution, even death.]

To Review and Remember

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the LORD Almighty. *Zechariah 4:6*

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