

Daniel 11: The Crusades



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“CRUSADES, military expeditions undertaken by Western European Christians between 1095 and 1270, usually at the behest of the papacy, to recover Jerusalem and other Palestinian places of pilgrimage from Muslim control. The name crusade (from Lat., “cross,” the emblem of the Crusaders) was also applied, especially in the 13th century, to wars against pagan peoples, Christian heretics, and political foes of the papacy.

“The origin of the Crusades is rooted in the political upheaval that resulted from the expansion of the Seljuk Turks in the Middle East in the mid-11th century. Western Christians viewed the conquest of Syria and Palestine by these aggressive Muslims with fright and alarm. Turkish invaders also penetrated deep into the Christian Byzantine Empire and subjected many Greek, Syrian, and Armenian Christians to their rule. The Crusades were in part a reaction to these events, as well as serving the ambitions of 11th -, 12th-, and 13th-century popes who sought to extend their political and religious power. Crusading armies were, in a sense, the military arm of papal policy.” (Verse 24).

“They also offered an outlet for the ambitions of land-hungry knights and noblemen. At the same time, the expeditions offered rich commercial opportunities to the merchants of the growing cities of the West, particularly Genoa, Pisa, and Venice.” (Verse 24 – “distribute plunder, loot and wealth among his followers.”)

“Crusading thus had a broad appeal to numerous Europeans. Some went on Crusades out of greed, some out of religious fervor; almost all Crusaders sought adventure, and many of them believed that their participation would virtually guarantee personal salvation. Every Crusader probably had different reasons for participation.”

“The Crusades began formally on Tuesday, Nov. 27, 1095, in a field just outside the walls of the French city of Clermont-Ferrand. On that day Pope Urban II preached a sermon to crowds of laypersons and clergy attending a church council at Clermont. In his sermon, the pope outlined a plan for a Crusade and called on his listeners to join its ranks. The response was positive and overwhelming. Pope Urban then commissioned the bishops at the council to return to their homes and to enlist others in the Crusade. He also outlined a basic strategy: Individual groups of Crusaders would begin the journey in August 1096. Each group would be self-financing and responsible to its own leader.” (Verse 25).

“The groups would make their separate ways to the Byzantine capital, Constantinople, where they would rendezvous. From there, in concert with the Byzantine emperor and his army, they would launch a counterattack against the Seljuk conquerors of Anatolia. Once that region was under Christian control, the Crusaders would campaign against the Muslims in Syria and Palestine, with Jerusalem as their ultimate goal.

“In broad outline the First Crusade conformed to the scheme envisioned by the pope. Recruitment went forward vigorously during the remainder of 1095 and the early months of 1096. Five major armies of noblemen ultimately assembled in late summer, 1096, to set out on the Crusade. The majority were from France, but significant numbers also came from Lorraine, Burgundy, Flanders, and southern Italy.

“The pope had not foreseen the popular enthusiasm that his Crusade aroused among non-noble townspeople and peasantry. Alongside the Crusade of the nobility a popular one materialized among the common people. The largest and most important group of popular Crusaders was recruited and led by a Picard preacher known as Peter the Hermit. Although the participants in the popular Crusade were numerous, only a tiny fraction of them ever succeeded in reaching the Middle East; even fewer survived to see the ultimate triumph of the Crusade at Jerusalem.

“Resting at Antioch for the remainder of the summer and early

fall, the Crusaders set out on the final leg of their journey in late November 1098. Now they avoided attacks on cities and fortified positions in order to conserve their forces. In May 1099 the Crusaders reached the northern borders of Palestine; on the evening of June 7 they camped within sight of Jerusalem's walls.

“The city was at this point under Egyptian (king of the South) control; its defenders were numerous and well prepared for a siege. The Crusaders attacked briskly. With the aid of reinforcements from Genoa and newly constructed siege machines, they took Jerusalem by storm on July 15; they then massacred virtually every inhabitant. In the Crusaders' view, they purified the city by washing it in the blood of the defeated infidels.”

“A week later the army elected one of its leaders, Godfrey of Bouillon, duke of Lower Lorraine, to rule the newly won city. Under his leadership the army then fought its last campaign, defeating an Egyptian army at Ascalon (now Ashqelon, Israel) on August 12. Soon afterward the great majority of the Crusaders returned to Europe, leaving Godfrey and a small remnant of the original force to organize a government and to establish Latin (Western European) control over the conquered territories.”

“The victories of the First Crusade were in large part due to the Crusaders' not confronting a united Muslim world but instead dealing with a number of isolated and relatively weak Muslim powers. The generation after the First Crusade, however, saw the



the expedition was directed against Tunis rather than Egypt. It ended abruptly when Louis died in Tunisia during the summer of 1270.”

“The expulsion of the Latins from the Holy Land did not end Crusading efforts, but the response of European kings and nobles to repeated calls for further Crusades was feeble, and later expeditions accomplished little. Two centuries of Crusades left little mark on Syria and Palestine, save for the castles, churches, and fortifications that the Crusaders left behind. The principal effects of the Crusades were felt in Europe, not in the Middle East. The Crusades had bolstered the commerce of the Italian cities, had generated interest in exploration of the Orient, and had established trade markets of enduring importance. The experiments of the papacy and European monarchs in raising money to finance the Crusades led to the development of systems of direct general taxation that had long-term consequences for the fiscal structure of European governments. (Verse 28) Although the Latin states in the East were short-lived, the experience of the Crusaders established mechanisms that later generations of Europeans used and improved on when they colonized the territories discovered by the explorers of the 15th and 16th centuries.” Infopedia

Starting in verse 30, we have another break in the old Crusade, and a beginning in a new Crusade. The Crusades were a bust and amounted to nothing more than wasted life. Except for the Catholic Church, most nations had been drained of their money fighting these wars. However, they were very profitable to the Catholic Church.

“Ships of the western coastlands will oppose him, and he will lose heart.” Verse 30

We have the same analogy in Revelation 18:17-19. Sea captains and ships stand for the churches (ships) and their ministers (sea captains) who profited from the Catholic Church and her pagan doctrines. Since all churches will come under the power of the Catholic Church at the end of time, Revelation 18:17-19 makes perfect sense.

beginning of Muslim reunification in the Middle East under the leadership of Imad ad-Din Zangi (1084-1146), ruler of Mosul and Aleppo. Under Zangi, the Muslim forces scored their first major victory against the Crusaders by taking the city of Edessa (present Urfa, Turkey) in 1144; they then systematically dismantled the Crusader state in that region.” (Verse 25)

“The papacy’s response to these events was to proclaim the Second Crusade late in 1145. The new expedition attracted numerous recruits, among them the king of France, Louis VII, and the Holy Roman emperor, Conrad III. Conrad’s German army set out for Jerusalem from Nuremberg in May 1147; the French forces followed about a month later. In Anatolia the Germans fell into an ambush, from which only a few escaped. The French army was more fortunate, but they also suffered serious casualties during the journey, and only part of the original force reached Jerusalem in 1148. In consultation with King Baldwin III of Jerusalem and his nobles, the Crusaders decided to attack Damascus in July. The expedition failed to take the city, however, and shortly after the collapse of this attack the French king and the remains of his army returned home.”

“The failure of the Second Crusade left the Muslim powers free to regroup. Zangi had died in 1146, but his successor, Nur ad-Din (1118-74), was able to expand his realm into a major power in the Middle East. In 1169 his forces, under the command of Saladin, took control of Egypt. When Nur ad-Din died five years later, Saladin succeeded him as ruler of a Muslim state that stretched from the Libyan Desert to the Tigris Valley and surrounded the remaining Crusader states on three fronts. After a series of crises during the 1180s, Saladin finally invaded the kingdom of Jerusalem in force in May 1187. On July 4 he decisively defeated the Latin army at Hattin (Hittin). In the after-math of this victory, Saladin swept through most of the Crusader strongholds in the kingdom of Jerusalem. Jerusalem itself surrendered to him on October 2. At this point the only major city still in Crusader hands was Tyre in Lebanon.” (Verse 25 continued)

“On Oct. 29, 1187, Pope Gregory VIII (d. 1187) proclaimed the Third Crusade. Western enthusiasm for the plan was widespread,

and three major European monarchs enlisted in its ranks: the Holy Roman emperor, Frederick I Barbarossa, the French king, Philip II Augustus, and the English king, Richard I Lion-Heart. The kings and their numerous followers constituted the largest Crusading force that had taken the field since 1095, but the outcome of all this effort was meager. Barbarossa died in Anatolia while on his way to the Holy Land, and most of his army returned to Germany immediately following his death. Although both Philip Augustus and Richard Lion-Heart reached Palestine with their armies intact, they were unable to recapture Jerusalem or much of the former territory of the Latin Kingdom. They did succeed, however, in wresting from Saladin control of a chain of cities along the Mediterranean coast. By October 1192, when Richard finally left Palestine, the Latin Kingdom had been reconstituted. Smaller than the original kingdom and considerably weaker militarily and economically, the second kingdom eked out a precarious existence for another century.”

“No subsequent Crusade achieved anything like the military success of the Third Crusade. The fourth one (1202-04) was plagued by financial difficulties. In an effort to alleviate these, the leaders agreed to a plan to attack Constantinople in concert with the Venetians and a pretender to the Byzantine throne. The Crusaders succeeded in taking Constantinople, which they then plundered shamelessly. The Latin Empire of Constantinople, created by this Crusade, survived for less than 60 years and contributed nothing to the defense of the Holy Land.”

“In 1208, Pope Innocent III proclaimed a Crusade against the Albigenses, a religious sect in southern France. The ensuing Crusade (1209-29) was the first to be fought in Western Europe.”

“The Fifth Crusade (1217-21) had a promising beginning with the taking of the Egyptian seaport of Damietta in 1219. The strategy, sensible as far as it went, called for an attack on Egypt, the capture of Cairo, and then a campaign to secure control of the Sinai, seen as a link between Egypt and the Latin Kingdom that would cut off the remaining Muslim powers from the wealth and grain supplies of Egypt. Implementation of this strategy, however, fell short of the goal. The attack on Cairo was abortive,

and promised reinforcements failed to materialize. In August 1221 the Crusaders were forced to surrender Damietta to the Egyptians, and the expedition broke up.”

“The Crusade of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II differed in approach from all the others... Undaunted, Frederick embarked for the Holy Land in June 1228. There he conducted his unconventional Crusade almost entirely by diplomatic negotiations with the Egyptian sultan Al-Kamil (r. 1218-38). These negotiations produced a peace treaty by which the Egyptians restored Jerusalem to the Crusaders and guaranteed a 10-year respite from hostilities. (Verse 27) At the same time, the pope had proclaimed a Crusade against Frederick, raised an army, and proceeded to attack the emperor’s Italian possessions. Frederick returned to the West to cope with this threat in May 1229.” (Verse 30)

“Nearly 20 years elapsed between Frederick’s Crusade and the next large expedition to the Middle East, which was organized and financed by King Louis IX of France after the Muslims recaptured Jerusalem in 1244. Louis spent four years making careful plans and preparations for his ambitious expedition. At the end of August 1248, Louis and his army sailed to Cyprus, where they spent the winter in further preparations. Following the same basic strategy as the Fifth Crusade, Louis and his followers landed in Egypt on June 5, 1249, and the following day captured Damietta. The next phase of their campaign, an attack on Cairo in the spring of 1250, proved to be a catastrophe. The Crusaders failed to guard their flanks, and as a result the Egyptians retained control of the water reservoirs along the Nile. By opening the sluice gates, they created floods that trapped the whole Crusading army, and Louis was forced to surrender in April 1250. After paying an enormous ransom and surrendering Damietta, Louis sailed to Palestine, where he spent four years building fortifications and strengthening the defenses of the Latin Kingdom. In the spring of 1254 he and his army returned to France.”

“King Louis also organized the last major Crusade, in 1270. This time the response of the French nobility was unenthusiastic, and