

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
WEEK 6 · THE LONG ECLIPSE (A.D. 500–1500)

MEMBER STUDY GUIDE — PART FOUR: THE CHURCH MILITANT

The Crusades and the Inquisition — What Happened, Why It Happened, and What Scripture Says

"Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." — Matthew 26:52

I. What Is a Crusade?

Before we look at any individual Crusade, we need a working definition.

- ▶ The word "crusade" comes from the Latin for cross (crux). Crusaders sewed a cloth cross onto their clothing before marching to war.
- ▶ A crusade was a military campaign called and officially blessed by the Pope himself — not just a king making war on his own authority. That papal blessing is what made it a "holy war" in the minds of those who fought it.
- ▶ The Pope offered an indulgence to anyone who died on Crusade — a promise that the punishment for their sins would be fully wiped away. This single promise is the main reason so many ordinary people left home for years to fight.
- ▶ The goal was almost always "the Holy Land" — Jerusalem and the surrounding territory where Jesus lived, was crucified, and rose again, sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike.

II. Why Did the Crusades Begin?

- ▶ A.D. 1071 — At the Battle of Manzikert, the Seljuk Turks crushed the Byzantine Empire's army and occupied most of Asia Minor (modern Turkey) — the very region Paul evangelized and where the seven churches of Revelation once stood.
- ▶ Reports, some accurate and some exaggerated, of Christian pilgrims being harassed or attacked while visiting Jerusalem spread through Europe and built public outrage.
- ▶ A.D. 1095 — The Byzantine emperor asked the Pope for soldiers to help push back the Turks. At the Council of Clermont, Pope Urban II turned that request into a call for all of Christian Europe to march and retake Jerusalem itself, promising full forgiveness of sins to anyone who died trying. The crowd is said to have shouted back, "Deus vult!" — "God wills it!"

III. Overview: Nine Crusades Over Two Centuries

There were nine numbered Crusades between 1096 and 1272. Only the first one achieved its goal.

Crusade	Dates	Outcome
First	1096–1099	Captured Jerusalem — the only Crusade that achieved its goal
Second	1147–1149	Failed to retake Edessa; retreated from Damascus
Third	1189–1192	Richard I vs. Saladin ended in a truce; Jerusalem stayed Muslim
Fourth	1202–1204	Diverted entirely — sacked Christian Constantinople instead
Fifth	1217–1221	Captured Damietta, Egypt, then forced to retreat
Sixth	1228–1229	Jerusalem regained by treaty, not battle — held ten years

Seventh	1248–1254	Louis IX captured and ransomed in Egypt
Eighth	1270	Louis IX died of disease before real fighting began
Ninth	1271–1272	Minor campaign; last major Crusade. Acre fell in 1291

By 1291, every foothold the Crusades had won in the Holy Land was gone.

IV. The First Crusade (A.D. 1096–1099)

WHO: Nobles and knights, not kings — Godfrey of Bouillon, Raymond of Toulouse, and Bohemond of Taranto led their own armies.

WHAT: A brutal three-year, roughly 2,000-mile march through Constantinople and Antioch, ending in the capture of Jerusalem on July 15, 1099 — followed by a massacre of the city's Muslim and Jewish residents.

OUTCOME: Four Crusader states were established (Jerusalem, Edessa, Antioch, Tripoli) and held for about ninety years. The only Crusade of the nine that achieved its goal.

"Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." — Matthew 26:52

V. The Second Crusade (A.D. 1147–1149)

WHO: The first Crusade led personally by reigning kings — Louis VII of France and Conrad III of Germany — persuaded by the preacher Bernard of Clairvaux.

WHAT: Edessa, one of the four Crusader states, fell to the Muslim general Zengi in 1144. Rather than retaking it, the crusader kings attacked Damascus, a city that hadn't even been hostile to them.

OUTCOME: A humiliating four-day retreat with nothing accomplished. Confidence in the crusading movement was badly damaged.

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God." — Psalm 20:7

VI. The Third Crusade (A.D. 1189–1192)

WHO: The most powerful lineup of any Crusade — Richard I "the Lionheart" of England, Philip II of France, and Emperor Frederick Barbarossa.

WHAT: Saladin's capture of Jerusalem in 1187 provoked the response. Barbarossa drowned before arriving; Philip went home early; Richard defeated Saladin at Arsuf but chose not to attack Jerusalem itself.

OUTCOME: The Treaty of Jaffa (1192): Jerusalem stayed under Muslim control, but unarmed Christian pilgrims were guaranteed safe access. A truce, not a conquest.

"The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." — Ecclesiastes 9:11

VII. The Fourth Crusade (A.D. 1202–1204)

WHO: Crusader knights under debt to Venice, steered by Venice's own commercial interests.

WHAT: Unable to pay Venice for ships, crusaders attacked the Christian city of Zara to settle the debt, then were diverted to Constantinople, which they besieged and sacked for three days.

OUTCOME: Constantinople, the largest Christian city on earth, was looted — never a Muslim army engaged. The wound this opened between the Eastern and Western churches, already split since the Great Schism of 1054, never healed.

"But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." — Galatians 5:15

VIII. The Fifth Crusade (A.D. 1217–1221)

WHO: No single dominant king — King Andrew II of Hungary, Duke Leopold VI of Austria, and papal legate Cardinal Pelagius shared command.

WHAT: Crusaders targeted Egypt instead of Jerusalem directly, capturing the port of Damietta in 1219. During the campaign, Francis of Assisi crossed enemy lines to peacefully meet the Sultan al-Kamil.

OUTCOME: Trapped between the flooding Nile and Egyptian forces, crusaders surrendered Damietta and retreated completely in 1221.

"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it." — Psalm 127:1

IX. The Sixth Crusade (A.D. 1228–1229)

WHO: Emperor Frederick II — who led this Crusade while under excommunication for having delayed his crusading vow.

WHAT: Rather than fighting, Frederick negotiated directly with Sultan al-Kamil, securing Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, and a coastal corridor through diplomacy alone.

OUTCOME: Jerusalem returned to Christian control for the first time since 1187 — but by treaty, not conquest, and only for ten years. It fell back to Muslim rule in 1244, this time for good.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." — Matthew 5:9

X. The Seventh Crusade (A.D. 1248–1254)

WHO: King Louis IX of France — later canonized as a saint — funded and led this Crusade almost entirely himself.

WHAT: Louis captured Damietta again in 1249, but his advance toward Cairo was crushed at the Battle of Al Mansurah, and Louis himself was captured in 1250.

OUTCOME: Louis was ransomed for roughly 400,000 livres, then spent four more years shoring up the Crusader states before returning to France in 1254 — nothing lasting gained.

"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help... but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel." — Isaiah 31:1

XI. The Eighth Crusade (A.D. 1270)

WHO: Louis IX again, sixteen years after his first failed Crusade, this time targeting Tunis at his brother Charles of Anjou's urging.

WHAT: An epidemic — likely dysentery or typhoid — swept the crusader camp almost immediately after landing, before any real fighting occurred.

OUTCOME: Louis IX died of the illness in 1270. The remaining leaders negotiated a treaty and sailed home; the Crusade collapsed almost as soon as it began.

"Ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour." — James 4:14

XII. The Ninth Crusade (A.D. 1271–1272)

WHO: Prince Edward of England (later King Edward I), who had joined Louis IX's Eighth Crusade and continued on after Louis's death.

WHAT: Edward's small force could do little more than raid the countryside around Acre. He survived an assassination attempt by a poisoned blade.

OUTCOME: A truce was signed and Edward sailed home in 1272 to become king. No other major Crusade followed. Acre, the last Crusader city, fell in 1291.

"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof." — Ecclesiastes 7:8

XIII. What Was the Inquisition?

- ▶ The word "inquisition" comes from the Latin *inquisitio* — "to inquire into." An inquisition was an official church court set up to investigate people accused of heresy.
- ▶ "Heresy" meant publicly teaching or holding a belief the church's own councils had officially ruled false — not simply having a different personal opinion.
- ▶ There was no single "Inquisition" building or office. Popes authorized traveling judges, usually monks, to set up regional courts wherever heresy was believed to be spreading.

XIV. Why Did the Inquisition Begin?

- ▶ The Cathars, centered in Languedoc in southern France, taught that the physical world itself was evil, made by a lesser or false god — sharply different from Genesis 1, where God calls His creation good.
- ▶ Preaching and public debate failed to stop the Cathars' growth. In 1209, the church launched the Albigensian Crusade — an actual military campaign, complete with the same promised indulgences as a Crusade to the Holy Land, but aimed at fellow Europeans.
- ▶ In 1233, Pope Gregory IX formally established the Papal Inquisition, assigning it mainly to the Dominican order, to permanently investigate heresy rather than relying on occasional crusades.

XV. The Medieval Inquisition

- ▶ Formalized further at the Council of Toulouse (1229), which also forbade ordinary laypeople from owning a Bible.
- ▶ In 1252, Pope Innocent IV formally authorized torture as a tool for questioning suspected heretics.
- ▶ The process offered almost no protection for the accused — guilt could be assumed whether a person confessed under torture or resisted it. Punishments ranged from fines to being burned at the stake.
- ▶ Many condemned as "heretics" were guilty of nothing more than owning a Bible in their own language or questioning a practice no apostle ever taught.

XVI. The Spanish Inquisition (A.D. 1478 Onward)

WHO: Created by Spain's own monarchs, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, with permission from Pope Sixtus IV in 1478 — controlled by the Spanish crown, not run directly by Rome.

WHAT: It targeted conversos — Jews and Muslims pressured into converting to Catholicism, especially after Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 — suspected of secretly practicing their original faith.

OUTCOME: Under Tomás de Torquemada, it became infamous for torture and public burnings. It was not formally abolished until 1834 — more than 350 years after it began, and long after the medieval Inquisition had faded.

"The LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." — 1 Samuel 16:7

XVII. The Military-Religious Orders

- ▶ The Knights Templar, founded around 1119 in Jerusalem to protect pilgrims, combined monastic vows (poverty, chastity, obedience) with the profession of a soldier — a fusion the New Testament nowhere authorizes.
- ▶ Because Templars couldn't easily be robbed, they became Europe's first international bankers, holding castles and estates across the continent, answerable to the Pope alone.
- ▶ In 1307, France's King Philip IV had the Templars arrested on fabricated charges and tortured into false confessions. Pope Clement V dissolved the order in 1312; its last Grand Master was burned at the stake in 1314 — the same machinery built to judge heresy eventually consumed the church's own creation.

XVIII. Key Idea: The Apostolic Pattern vs. the Church Militant

How the apostles advanced the gospel

"And they went forth, and preached every where... the Lord working with them" (Mark 16:20) — persuasion, preaching, and a willingness to suffer, never the sword.

How the medieval church often advanced it

Crusade and Inquisition sought to compel belief and punish dissent by force — a method the New Testament nowhere authorizes.

What scholarly honesty requires us to say

An institution can do real good in one century and seriously betray its own founding pattern in another. Both can be true at once. Acts — the apostles' actual behavior — remains the standard we measure every century against, this one included.

XIX. Discussion Questions

- ▶ Only the First Crusade achieved its stated goal, out of nine. What does that track record suggest about using warfare as a means of accomplishing God's purposes?
- ▶ The Sixth Crusade regained Jerusalem through diplomacy, led by an excommunicated emperor, while the sword-led Crusades largely failed. What does that irony teach us?
- ▶ The Inquisition was built to protect right doctrine, yet it punished people for owning a Bible in their own language. How does good intention not guarantee a good method?
- ▶ Read Mark 16:20 and Galatians 5:15 side by side. How would church history look different if every generation had measured itself against the apostles' actual example in Acts?
- ▶ Where in our own lives or church culture might we be tempted to use pressure, control, or compulsion instead of patient, Spirit-led persuasion?

XX. Notes
