

Christians Crusading: Exploring Medieval Spirituality

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[0:00] Good morning. I see some familiar faces out there. Good to see you again. We're on Houston. We have contact. Great. Greetings from St. Peter's Fireside.

And speaking of the fireside, I've got to zip down there right after this, so I'll be leaving right at about 10. I hope to have a few minutes for questions at the end, but as is always the case, if you have questions and we can't get to them, do send me an email.

Well, I'll be glad to write you back and send you along some further things to read or have a look at if you're interested in this topic, which is, to say the least, a very interesting topic.

Let's pray. Lord, as we plunge into this odd moment of Christian history, we ask that you would help us to get into the shoes of our forebears in the church to understand this time and their motives, not uncritically, but with a desire to understand, to learn from their example, and then to put off things which we don't need to take from it.

Thank you for the opportunity to meet this morning. We thank you for the Lord's Day, which reminds us of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and a time for your people to gather together in faith, love, and in hope.

[1:09] Amen. Amen. So, I call this Reclaiming St. George. St. George, as you know, is the patron saint of England, but before England, he's actually from Roman Palestine.

So, he was transported, and his flag, which is still the English flag, the one that's used chiefly in football these days, was brought by the Crusaders.

But St. George himself was one of the most popular saints amongst early Christians, and then that continued on into medieval Christianity in Europe. So, that's why it's thus titled. Now, what I want to do, basically, is two things.

I want to talk to you about the history of the Crusades, because if you're like me, you probably know that these things called the Crusades happen, but that's maybe all you know. And if you've seen Kingdom of Heaven by, is it Ridley Scott?

Ridley Scott? Ridley Scott, yeah. You have some sense of what it was like, though that film was terribly historically inaccurate, even though the cinematography is beautiful. So, and then I want to talk, more importantly, about the theology of the Crusades.

[2:13] We're going to do that by looking at some primary source material, which I'll present to you from the period of the five Crusades. So, back history. There's always a back story, and you need to know a little bit about the back story.

You know, several, multiple centuries, actually, before the first crusade took place. So, let's look at the back story. Okay. We're going to run from 632 until 1071, when the first crusade was launched. Okay, so in 632, the Mediterranean is a Christianized region. The Eastern Roman Empire, known as Byzantium, centered in the city by the same name, also known as Constantinople, and today as Istanbul, is still the principal power, retaining direct and indirect control over Egypt and what we know as Israel and the Levant and modern-day Turkey and Greece, other portions of northern Africa, Sicily, and Italy.

Now, the principal rival to the Byzantine Empire is the Persian Empire, culturally still pagan and Zoroastrian in its religious traditions. The Persians and the Greco-Romans are still licking their wounds from an exhausting 26-year war for control of the Levant in Syria.

That's 632 AD. 633 to 709, Arab armies, newly unified by Islam, conquer the bulk of the Eastern Roman Empire, and that includes Jerusalem and Antioch, and between 637 and 638, other territories of the Levant.

[3 : 48] So the Christianized parts begin to fall. The Persian Empire itself is defeated by the Arabs in 637, and it's fully absorbed into their empire building in 651.

Roman Egypt, including that great city Alexandria, is conquered by the Arabs between 639 and 641. Shortly after that, northern Africa all the way to Gibraltar between 647 and 709 is taken. In 711, Arab and Berber armies cross into Spain and conquer the Iberian Peninsula. In the northern mountains, a rebellion results, and a small kingdom is created under a Christian king. Sort of the last outpost of Christianity there. 732 AD, those Arab and Berber armies advance on into central France. Some of you will know about the event I'm about to describe. Between Poitiers and Tours, they are defeated by a Frankish army led by Charles Martel, the lord mayor of the king's household. Following that victory, a Frankish kingdom arises as a regional power, culminating in the pronouncement of Charlemagne, Martel's grandson, as the Western Roman emperor on Christmas Day in the year 800.

[5 : 06] You all probably know a bit about that history. In 813, the bones of St. James are allegedly announced to have been discovered in the kingdom of Lyon, northwestern Spain.

And as a result, Santiago de Compostela becomes the most important holy site in western Europe, after Rome. Particularly a holy site for Christians in France and the northern parts of Europe. We jump forward to 1037, the time of Ferdinand I of Spain, of Castile to be specific. And he begins a campaign of reconquest against the Muslim principalities, which had been established in Spain now for several centuries.

With the help of El Cid, the Spanish Christians experienced almost miraculous success over the following decades. So there's a successful reconquest that's happening there in the 11th century. In 1138 AD, the Normans begin to adventure and establish themselves in southern Italy, conquering both Byzantine and Muslim principalities there in southern Italy and Sicily.

[6 : 09] And eventually leading to the expulsion of Muslim control from Italy and Sicily. So that's the Normans. 1054, big event, a sad event.

The Pope's envoy excommunicates the patriarch of Constantinople, causing what we know as the great schism between the western and the eastern church. Not too long after that, 1071, the Seljuk Turks conquer Roman Anatolia and the Arab Levant, leading to massacres of the Christians who were still living there, both in Antioch and Jerusalem.

And in response to that, the emperor of Constantinople requests help from the Pope, who had only a few decades before sent his envoy to excommunicate the patriarch in Constantinople.

So strained relations, but still a cry for help. That's 1071. And 1071, that sort of sets the stage for what we would call the First Crusade now, which was called in 1095.

So about 25 years later. And that crusade, number one, was called by Pope Urban II.

[7 : 19] And he called Western Christians to reestablish Christian rule over lost portions of the eastern Roman Empire, and in particular, Jerusalem. In 1099, the First Crusade reconquered the Levant and Jerusalem, and it defeated an Egyptian army.

Godfrey of Bouillon, you might know his name, becomes the protector of the newly established kingdom of Jerusalem, and his successors become the kings of Jerusalem.

These are Crusader knights. Godfrey himself would not accept the crown at his coronation in Jerusalem, but instead he said it belonged to Christ alone, and so he put it beside.

He wouldn't put it on his head. His successors, however, put it on their head. Now, as a result of that crusade, other leaders, Godfrey's peers, became the counts of Tripoli and Antioch and Edessa. So a sort of a crusader aristocracy is established there. The Knights Hospitaller are formed in the aftermath of that conquest, as are the Knights Templar, formed about 1119, all under the governance of this newly established kingdom of Jerusalem.

[8 : 28] That's the First Crusade. The Second Crusade was called in 1147, so about 50 years later. This was a follow-up crusade that had two wings.

One was focused on Spain, right, and taking back Spain from its Muslim occupants, Arab Muslim occupants, and then the other was focused on Syria. The Spanish reconquest was largely successful.

The Syrian reconquest was largely unsuccessful. In the aftermath of that, about 30 years later, in 1171 to 1180, a Sunni Kurd arose as a great leader called Saladin.

You might be familiar with him. And he worked to unite Egypt and Syria under a caliphate. Now, he began to target some of the crusader states set up in the Holy Land and began to promote the

religious significance of jihad within Islam.

In 1187, Saladin led a Muslim force against some of the crusader kingdoms there in the Holy Land. There was a famous battle called the Battle of Hatim.

[9 : 37] That was July 4th, 1187. And in that battle, the crusaders were decisively defeated by Saladin. And that led to the surrender of Jerusalem, which had been taken back in the First Crusade.

And the crusaders, they didn't leave the Holy Land. They retreated to the coast where they built some more fortifications and palaces. I saw this one not too long ago when I was in Caesarea. That's a crusader fort that's still there. Very close to the legendary palace of Herod the Great that extended out over the water in Caesarea. That's where Paul spent some time.

So they were pushed basically to the outskirts of the Holy Land. And they built these forts and they were largely impenetrable. That's the second crusade. Now, a few years later, it's no surprise, they decided they need to launch a third crusade to try to take Jerusalem back.

And so that third crusade was called in 1189. And this is the one that involved the famous Richard the Lionhearted, featured in the Robin Hood story. He was away crusading while his wicked brother John was ruling in England.

[10 : 41] And there is some truth to that story. So Richard teamed up with Philip of France to successfully re-engage Saladin's armies and to enlarge the crusader territory once again.

They did succeed in enlarging it along the coast. They did not succeed in taking back Jerusalem. Okay. Basically, they ran out of energy and of supplies and money.

And so Richard brokered a negotiation with Saladin, which allowed pilgrim and merchant rights of access to Jerusalem. And then allowed the crusaders to maintain their crusader states along the coast.

There were some other concessions that were part of that three-year truce, which was established in 1092. But still, there were some people who were dissatisfied by that outcome. So our fourth crusade was called in 1202.

Again, this event sought to reclaim Jerusalem, which was at this point not in control of Christians. It turned into quite a fiasco. This is a sad moment in history as well. The original plan of this crusade had been to move through Egypt and to conquer some Egyptian armies that would have posed a threat to reclaiming Jerusalem and then to move on and take back the holy city.

[11 : 55] However, before all of that transpired, some envoys from the fledgling remnant of the Eastern Roman Empire asked the crusaders who were on their way to Jerusalem if they would take a detour to help come to the aid of a Byzantine prince called Alexios Angelos.

They wanted to help him. He needed some help to secure the throne. And the crusader army could be a useful tool for that. So they agreed because he said if they helped him, he would fund the fourth crusade.

And for the record, crusading was an expensive occupation. So they decided to do that. They came to the assistance of this prince.

He was crowned. However, within a year or two, he was deposed. And so the financing fell through. And that upset a lot of people. So in retaliation, the crusaders turned their energies away from reclaiming Jerusalem and turned them towards Constantinople.

You can read about it in this book. Resulted in the sack of Constantinople, a Christian city sacked by Christian crusaders. This is considered one of the final acts of the great schism.

[13 : 04] So there are religious tensions between the Latin and the Eastern Church at play in this. By the time Constantinople had been sacked, only a tenth of the original groups of knights still remained to go on to Jerusalem.

So the original objective was not satisfied. And needless to say, the Greek church, the Eastern Church felt deeply betrayed by the Latin Church as a result of this fiasco.

In case you wondered if that was it, there's one more. The Fifth Crusade, 1213. It's a bit like Pluto. It's not quite a crusade, you know, so not quite a planet.

But the plan for this crusade was to move through Egypt and to try to make amends for the fiasco of the Fourth Crusade. However, supplies failed, and so withdrawal was precipitated.

But a truce was brokered on the way out, an eight-year truce allowing for pilgrimage to Jerusalem. So that's the Fifth Crusade, a brief event, not very successful, but it secured pilgrim travel rights, which were very important at that time.

[14:06] Now, in the aftermath of this, there were still efforts and popes who wanted to mobilize people to take Jerusalem. In 1240, the pope called on the Holy Emperor Frederick II to try to do that.

Now, Frederick II, it seems, was a shrewd politician and diplomat, so he said, let's not send an army. Let's see if we can negotiate something. And evidently, he was good at negotiating. So he did negotiate Christian control over Jerusalem, except for the Muslim holy sites.

And he made an alliance with the Sultan of Egypt. So it was a very good result, and it didn't involve any bloodshed. However, that was dissatisfying to the pope, who I think wanted some proper conquest.

And so he was angry at Frederick II for this peaceable outcome and called a crusade against Frederick's assets and territories in southern Italy in retaliation.

So that resulted in the French conquest of southern Italy, a crusade against one's own, as it were. 1265 to 1291 brings an end to the crusading period.

[15:07] Mamluk Turks invaded the remaining crusader states like the ones on the coast, gradually eliminating all of the citadels. The last major city on the mainland, called Acre, fell on the 18th of May, 1291.

So that's a brief history of the crusade. Any questions there? Yes, sir. You mentioned about Antioch, and I've seen in the Bible the Church of Antioch. Yes. Where was Antioch located? I'd have to have a map to show you, but I guess it's in modern-day Turkey.

Yeah. So if you do a tour of Paul's footsteps, you'd go there. And your name were a fellow out of the French side? I think probably originally. Yeah, we were from some of those bad conquering Normans.

Yes, sir. What about the beggars' crusade? Don't know anything about the beggars' crusade. Yeah. So, yeah. Children's crusade? Don't know anything about that either.

Just know the name. That's it. Do you know the Mamluk Turks, have they been Islamicized? Yes. I think everyone had been Islamicized. Yes. They weren't Arabs, though.

[16:10] When did they sort of take over as the power to push the Christians over there? I think probably at the end of the 13th century is when they kind of rose. That's right.

Yeah. Yeah. And just so you know, there was lots of... I've talked about the five big crusades that are linked to reclaiming the Holy Land, and especially Jerusalem. But in this period, crusading was a very popular pastime.

There were all sorts of crusades, and you can read about lots of minor crusades that took place within what we would know as Europe, in the eastern parts, and also in Spain, and so forth. So, again, this was an era of crusading, but we're just focusing on those to the Holy Land today.

Yeah. All right. We'll move now into some of the theology. What motivated all this? Because remember, everyone here is, at least in a formal sense, Christian. Okay?

Okay. Again, the ideas that we're going to be engaging with, they can be somewhat perplexing and even off-putting. Some of them are more noble than others, but it goes without saying that when the crusades themselves were carried out, all sorts of mixed motives came into play.

[17:15] Right? Not unlike the Iraq War, perhaps. Right? Some good motives, but then things get tarnished with mixed motives along the way. So what we're doing, I'm not endorsing anything here.

I'm just the historian of theology. I'm just telling you how people thought so we can get into their shoes. So what I want to do is look at, I have examined some of the primary texts of folks who were involved in calling crusades and in popularizing crusades and justifying them.

We're going to look at those to try to get a sense of why and how did Christians rationalize this.

Okay. Okay. So Urban II, a pope, he called the first crusade and his call to arms included an indulgence, right?

Certain sort of pardon for sin. This is what he wrote in one of his letters. Whoever for devotion alone, devotion to God that is, not to gain honor or money, goes to Jerusalem to liberate the church of God can substitute this journey for all penance.

Okay. That's a pretty sweet deal at that time. Now among Urban's surviving writings, there are four letters that are especially important and pertinent to what we're doing right now.

[18:31] Three of them were written to partisans and monks in Flanders. One's a personal letter written to nobility in Catalonia. I'm not going to read you the letters, but I want to summarize some of the key theological points that he makes in these letters, which are calling through crusade and

justifying crusade.

So there's three things we want to see in these letters. Number one, the crusades are necessary and fitting as a part of Christian discipleship because they are an act of liberation.

The pope repeatedly refers in his letters to Christians in Asia and the Near East as being oppressed by the Saracens. Their freedom has been robbed. Thus, crusading is an act of God and neighbor love, loving God by loving and defending God's people who are neighbors.

So crusading is a work of just liberation from the savagery which beset Eastern Christians. Again, that's paraphrasing quite closely the pope's words in this letter. Number two, crusading merits special favor from God because it is a spiritual activity undertaken in service to God and because it entails a considerable risk, the risk of one's life.

Thus, the pope suggests that signing up for a crusade will win a person released from penance because the crusader is someone who risks their belongings and their lives for the love of God.

[19 : 52] And number three, crusading is regarded as an expression of discipleship. It's part of following Christ. It is, quote, not he who begins, but he who shall persevere to the end that shall be saved.

That's what the pope says in one of these letters. True devotion to God. Perseverant devotion is manifest by crusading. This is what the pope suggests. Now, at the center of the pope's remarks here is this notion of taking up one's cross, which is an important theme of crusading theology.

To the medieval spiritual imagination, taking up one's cross, unlike for us perhaps, would have been understood in martial terms, pertaining to warring and battling and so forth.

So, taking up one's cross translated into going to battle for God under the banner of the cross. Now, that perspective, that martial understanding of taking up the cross, some of you who know a bit about earlier church history, has its roots in the conversion of Constantine, in hoc sic.

Do you know that phrase? In this sign. There's a debate about what that means, but one of the commonly understood meanings is in this sign, it being the sign of the cross, you shall conquer.

[21 : 04] Right? And that's referring to conquering in the military sense. You get a sense of this type of martial understanding of taking up one's cross in a crusader poem from the late 12th century.

Let me read you a line from it. He who was put on the cross for us did not love us with a simulated love. He loved us like the finest friend and lovingly cared for us and carried so much anguish on that cross very gently.

Do you know what God has promised to those who take up their cross in like manner? God help me, a very fair wage, paradise by firm promise. He who can gain this prize is made if he waits tomorrow.

It's a poem from the 12th century that was used among common people. So that's Pope Urban II. Let's look at another exponent of crusading theology.

This is Gilbert Gilbert of Nogent. He was influenced by Pope Urban II. In his own efforts to chronicle and extend and bolster the crusade call, produced a very influential theological sentiment.

[22 : 12] Namely, that a crusade is an expression of God's will. This is something that Gilbert really pushes in his work. It comes to the fore in one of his most famous surviving works called *Historia*.

I want to briefly consider his reasoning on the subject of crusading, and there are three things to mention here. Gilbert's characterization elevates crusading above all other forms of human warring.

It's a higher form of conquest and warring. Most battles, he said, are driven by fear. So soldiers of different races and nations will occasionally join forces against a common feared enemy.

But with the crusade, something more remarkable happens. Soldiers of different races and tribes and nations join together not out of a common fear, but out of a common reverence.

It is God and God's purposes that unite them. This unity is a great virtue, and it's at the heart of crusading, according to Gilbert. Secondly, Gilbert also notes that crusading is not motivated by ambition for fame or wealth.

[23 : 18] So that sets it apart from other types of war and conquest. It's not impelled by hunger for territorial expansion. In fact, the lack of those types of motives really sets crusading apart from all other human conflicts.

Crusading is a response to God-given zeal. God is the source of the, quote, fire of eagerness among those who crusade. They see God as their leader more than any particular king.

God goes before them in the cause. This is purely religious. It's not economic. It's not motivated by the acquisition of power or territory. Now, as a result, Gilbert gives a lot of stress to that point. The enmity that often separated the different people groups of northern Europe evaporates when a crusade happens because they all come together. Right? And so he says this common allegiance to God allows them to transcend petty tribal and national divisions.

And thus it makes crusading a holy thing. That's what Gilbert says. And number three, sort of dovetailing with that, he sees and stresses that crusading is a holy vocation.

[24 : 25] And it is a holy vocation for the laity. Right? A holy vocation for those who do not take holy orders or enter the monastic life. Right? It allows them to bring spiritual meaning to what they do.

Crusading makes it possible for people to, quote, obtain some measure of God's grace while pursuing their own careers with the liberty and in the dress which they are accustomed.

Right? That just means it's a holy vocation for lay people. And in this sense you might say that this theological mentality of crusading anticipates a certain feature of the Protestant Reformation.

Namely that a person can have a genuinely spiritual vocation without taking holy orders, without entering a monastery. That's Gilbert of Nogent.

Number three, you've probably heard of this fellow, Bernard of Clairvaux, probably the greatest preacher of crusading in Europe. Uh, he was involved with the, uh, the, the galvanizing of, of knights and foot soldiers for the second crusade.

[25 : 35] Now, despite the offensive nature of the crusading campaigns, his sermons on crusading have been called by many scholars the most beautiful of all crusading documents. He was, he was quite an orator, quite a wordsmith.

Though his rationale for crusading, I think at least, is somewhat jarring. Uh, but it does give a riveting glimpse into a new dimension of crusading theology. So a couple things we want to look at with Bernard.

Firstly, Bernard's sermons on crusading stress the link between the forgiveness of sins and making pilgrimage. Right? Like a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Whether as a person sort of doing a vacation type pilgrimage. And those were very common in the Middle Ages. I actually had a friend who looked at some, um, pilgrimage, uh, sort of brochures from this time.

You know, where you kind of list all the things that come with the package. They, they actually had that. Okay? Not, not too unlike trips to the Holy Land these days. Right? Uh, but a strong link between making that trip, whether as in a vacation capacity.

[26 : 39] That's anachronistic to say vacation, but in a peaceable capacity or in a crusading capacity. Between doing that journey and the forgiveness of sins. Right? And so if you lose Jerusalem, if you don't have control of it, you forfeit the opportunity to have those sins forgiven.

Because you need to make that pilgrimage to get them forgiven. Right? And since sin is so serious, the need for forgiveness of sin is quite serious too. And therefore, the Holy Land should be protected at all costs.

So that's the, that's the logic you see in Bernard. Secondly, this is quite interesting. He sees crusading as a God-given opportunity to test and strengthen his people. To test and strengthen the church.

Right? Bernard's very clear. God has the power to take back the Holy Land on his own. He could do it without our help. Right? Yet he chooses not to do that. Why? Why does God want to use weak human vessels to reclaim the Holy Land instead of taking it back in his own power?

Right? Why would God rather not act? Or why would God rather act through weak human vessels? Bernard calls it, calls us poor little worms. Why would he rather act through poor little worms rather than self-claim, you know, in his own power Israel?

[27 : 51] Bernard says God wants to test and see if his people grieve over his plight. He wants to know if we care about the things that he cares about. And if the things that grieve God also grieve his people. That's a sign that we're really identified with God and that we love him.

And God grieves the loss of his Holy Land. And so his people should too. And God in his generosity wants to create an occasion for salvation to be extended. And because of that link between the forgiveness of sins and a pilgrimage, God is basically giving an opportunity for salvation to be extended.

He has laid this opportunity at your feet. Seize it. Seize it. Right? Embrace. And so Bernard says in all of this what we see is, I love this, God's radiant love is displayed.

That's what Bernard says. I doubt any of us would put it that way, huh? He's very careful to stress the need for forgiveness in all of this. He does not think of any of the crusaders as being righteous. Rather they are people in need of righteousness. He actually says crusaders, and this is what he says in the sermon to all the people he's talking to, you're murderers, robbers, adulterers, perjurers, and otherwise criminal.

[28 : 58] You need to be forgiven, so go crusade. That's what he says. God has deliberately made himself a debtor, right? So that he can reward his people when they intervene and go and reclaim Israel.

He creates a situation where he can reward our faithfulness. That's what Bernard says. So it's a marvelous and needful opportunity. Marvelous speaks of the generation of those who have the privilege to crusade as being a blessed generation.

He says our time in history is like the jubilee. We should all take up this call with joy and zeal and leave all malice behind.

That's what Bernard says. Now Bernard also caters to the warrior tendencies of medieval Europe. What he wants to do here is redirect and sort of sanctify them a little bit.

In his sermons he laments the predilection for violence that was so common in that culture at that time. He bemoans the fact that all the knights in Europe are constantly battling each other and killing each other, resulting in their death, and society suffers as a result of that.

[30 : 06] He says that type of violent activity is inherently sinful and it ruins the souls of those involved. But he says fighting in and of itself is not sinful.

It just needs a holy outlet. An expression that can be holy and approved by God. In crusading, guess what? Provides that outlet. Right? It's fighting and battle animated by noble and godly concerns.

In crusading, Bernard says this, You can have a battle. You can fight without endangering yourself. Now lastly, Bernard's explanation and defense, we'll see as coterminous with the feudal arrangement of medieval society, taps into, I guess what you would call the sort of tacit understanding of the way the world is organized in the feudal period.

Right? The need for crusading owes to God's loss of God's territory. Right? So, God is envisioned like a Lord who has lost his keep and his lands. Because Israel is God's special territory.

That's where Jesus lived just 30 years. That's where God incarnate existed. It's the land, quote, honored by his birth and embellished by his miracles. It was consecrated by his blood and enriched by his burial.

[31 : 24] Right? And now someone else has taken over God's land and keep. And so just like any surfer vassal would, you know, take up the call to arms if their Lord called them, so too our Lord is calling us.

You know, we're all his vassals and surfs. So we have to go help him take his territory back. So that's how crusading sort of dovetails with the feudal mentality. Gregory VIII, a pope, came after Urban III.

Urban's death, it seems, was precipitated by the news that Saladin had overcome the crusaders in Jerusalem in the Battle of Hattin, which I mentioned earlier.

The news gave him a heart attack or something. Okay? So after assuming office, Gregory decided to issue an encyclical calling for another crusade. This was the third crusade.

And in this encyclical, we get a few more insights about the rationale, theological basis for crusading. Several points are noteworthy here. Gregory says that the defeat by Saladin was brutal and humiliating.

[32 : 28] Right? In fact, it was. The bishops and the other leaders in Jerusalem were all beheaded publicly. So it was a brutal defeat. The holy sites were lost, and they were thus subject to profaning, profanation.

And then, the pope laments that worship of God has been banished from the Holy Land. Now, explaining this devastating state of affairs, Gregory invokes the notion of divine judgment against the church.

He notes that those who turn to the Lord and who are in the Lord's favor can do miraculous things. When people are turned towards God, you can be pursued by a thousand people and chased by

ten thousand, but still be victorious.

Right? Echoing some stories from the Old Testament, you might recall. Now, since that didn't happen in the second crusade, Gregory deduces that there's a need for repentance and a return to God.

And he draws this right out of the Old Testament. Right? So, his encyclical begins by calling for an amendment of sins and a voluntary returning to the Lord. Now, that type of biblical interpretation is something that Bernard of Clairvaux also uses.

[33 : 38] Yes. Bernard is very careful to point out from time to time that sometimes God judges the people that he's appointed to do his will. Because they are acting as unworthy executors of the divine will.

Again, you can see this reflecting patterns of Old Testament theology. Now, on the assumption that people can amend their ways, the church can repent and turn back to God.

Gregory then moves on to issue a call for that third crusade. Right? Right? And he's clear, as with his predecessors, that crusading is not something we do for money or for personal glory. But it's about doing God's will.

It's about reclaiming God's inheritance on earth, especially being in the land of Israel. Now, in order to entice people, he adds some signing bonuses to this encyclical.

And these include the full indulgence of faults and eternal life, the relaxation of reparation for sins or penance, and then also some practical bonuses. The protection of your goods and family by the church while you're away crusading for the man.

[34 : 41] Cessation of interest payments. That's very attractive, isn't it? And the suspension of any legal suits that might be pending against your name. Lots of good reasons to go crusading. So there we get another bit of an insight.

Our next source is James de Vitry. He was a bishop in Palestine. And while he was there in Palestine, he too preached on the merits of crusading.

And his sermons touch on a subject that has hitherto been untreated. He takes up the question, how can the church justify this violence, which was bound up with crusading, against the Saracens in the Holy Land?

How can we defend that particular feature of crusading? And he does. And he puts forth these vigorous determinations. To second-guess crusading.

To conclude that to be a Christian means you can never take up a sword and never do anything violent. Vitry says that is the devil trying to attack the fabric of the otherwise righteous activity of crusading.

[35 : 50] Such arguments, he said, are out there from the devil to seduce the simple mind. He also draws on the important earlier work of St. Augustine of Hippo. Developed the beginnings of theology of just war, which you may be familiar with.

And he says, like Augustine, that sometimes it's necessary to show benign harshness. It's necessary to show benign harshness. Sometimes it's necessary to resist certain enemies of the church for the sake of the church's survival.

This is what Vitry argues. Just as poisonous limbs must be cut from a tree, or decayed flesh must be cut from a body to save the life of the person, so too must the wicked sometimes be destroyed so that the good remain unharmed.

That's his reasoning and logic. He reminds that soldiering exists as a vocation that God ordained to repel violence. He reminds that physical strength is a gift from God.

And one of its God-given intended uses is the protection of the weak and of repelling violent forces. And the Saracens were deemed to be oppressing the weak, and they were deemed to be an oppressive and violent force.

[37 : 02] Now, Vitry is careful to qualify what he said by adding that crusading is not returning evil for evil. Christians don't do that. Rather, it's bringing goodness in terms of peace in place of evil.

And since crusading ultimately results in the expansion of the church, its accrued benefit is taking away from people the license to sin and replacing that with the freedom to serve God.

And that's a good thing. That's good for everybody. This is Vitry's thinking. Lastly, he makes an important linkage here, the linkage between dying in crusades and martyrdom.

And he says that to die as a crusader is to die as a martyr, and to die as a martyr is to die a death that ensures divine favor, because it is the death that results from an act of love for God.

Primary sources from their own words. Defense, rationale, call for crusading. I want to do now a little bit of a synopsis, summarizing some of what we've just seen and adding a few further insights for you.

[38 : 12] On the one hand, to us, the conception of a Christian holy war is a conceptual oxymoron. Rightly so, I think. Even so, it's important to see that our medieval forebears didn't see things the way that we did.

Right? It's been clearly evidenced through all the letters, epistles, sermons that we've just surveyed. I want to wrap things up with a few summational observations now.

Okay? First, the cross. This was the preeminent crusading symbol. In the hands of crusaders, the cross of Christ became a symbol of obedience through the physical sacrifice of martial combat. It was an icon of military victory through faith. Right? It was the emblem of the Miliz Christi, warriors for Christ. Right? How did the symbol of Christ's unjust crucifixion get transmuted into a symbol for crusader conquering?

It's a good question. Something I was wrestling with as I did this research. I think this shift can be illustrated in a variety of ways. We can't look at them all this morning. But one is through the theologizing work of St. Bernard of Clairvaux.

[39 : 22] Who brings a unique and somewhat radical interpretation of select New Testament passages. Those were used to kind of fuel the crusading impulse.

Let's consider how he treats Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 6. Who knows what's in chapter 6 that might be pertinent to what we're talking about this morning. That's right.

So how does Bernard read that? And it plays into his defense and call for crusading. As you know, Paul used the military metaphor to emphasize the revolutionary nature of Christianity and the sometimes intense call to discipleship in a world that sometimes loves darkness more than light. Paul is contrasting Christianity with Roman religion in those passages. And Roman religion is very much bound up with sanctioned military systems, as you know.

Now, in reading those same texts, Bernard reaches what I like to call a novel interpretation. He cites Paul to extend, he cites Paul in this passage, to extend approval for the founding of the Knights Templar, which was a crusading order.

[40 : 29] A group which he said felt indefatigably a double fight against flesh and blood as well as non-material forces of evil. For Bernard, the knight who puts on the breastplate of faith for his soul also puts on the breastplate of iron for his body.

That too plays a role in driving away the enemies of Christ. This is the type of interpretation, right? There's no division between the spiritual and material. The old material for the medieval was very martial at this time.

Needless to say, many continue to find this reading of St. Paul misguided and even mendacious. The Old Testament. Now, the Old Testament, some of the harem, the wars of conquest in ancient Israel, how those feature into the crusading mentality.

It was, and those passages from Joshua, for example, were sometimes cited to defend and justify crusades. In particular, those exponents of crusading theology drew several theological conclusions from these types of Old Testament texts.

Right? Not saying these are the right conclusions to draw, but these are the conclusions that they did draw at that time. Number one, they identified the church quite strongly with biblical Israel. Number two, they noted that sometimes God commands his people to eliminate their enemies, who are also God's enemies.

[41 : 51] And number three, for God's people, war has both a spiritual and a material dimension. You cannot totally spiritualize everything. Come on now. Everything's not spiritualized.

Right? So that's how they used those Old Testament texts. In order to understand crusading, it is also important to know a little bit about the penitential system that characterized medieval spirituality, in which the great reformers like Luther, Calvin, and others sought to sweep out as superstitious and unbiblical.

Rightly so. Medieval Christians experienced a great deal of anxiety about their salvation. Were they truly forgiven by God? Penance. Penance.

Certain acts and activities associated with contrition was a means of assuaging that type of angst. That's what the penitential system is all about. Helping you sleep well at night. The popularity of the cult of the saints.

Right? People who would advocate on your behalf before the throne of God. It attests to the constant anxiety for the assurance of salvation. Right? Now, in about 1053.

[42 : 57] Right? Before crusading, Pope Leo IX tapped into that penitential system, melding it, right? Fusing it to the warriorism of the culture at that time.

And what he did was he offered a remission of penance and absolution, which is the certification of divine forgiveness, to a band of German troops that fought for his interest against the Normans in southern Italy.

Okay? Okay? Now, that move wasn't connected to a crusade, but that move, the connection between penitential system and warriorism, it didn't miss the notice of some of those later popes who issued the first calls to crusade.

Okay? So, by the time of Urban II, called the First Crusade, warriors, acting in defense of the church and in service of the Pope, were involved in a service that was seen as, quote, an imitation of Christ's suffering against those who are enemies of the cross of Christ.

So, war, by the time of the First Crusade, building on the precedent of Leo the knight, war had become an act of penance. You'll never understand crusading unless you see that connection.

[44 : 06] Okay? That adaptation gained great traction among the lay people. Why? I want to just repeat something I said earlier, but if you say it twice, it's really important to hear.

Because penitential options for the lay person in the medieval system of spirituality were fairly limited as compared to those who were in religious orders, especially the monastics. Right? Given that warring activity itself created a need for penance, right, the urgency of doing penance was all the more intense for those who bore arms.

What better solution than making a connection between certain form of warring and penance?

There's a great natural mutuality there. Okay? So, that is how crusading became a practical mechanism for the expiation of one's sins.

Right? A new way of salvation for people in the military classes who didn't have access to the types of penitential options for those in the monastic orders. And in that way, crusading became a very powerful weapon in the Pope's armory.

Now, it wasn't just theology that was at play here. This is important to know. There were other factors. And so, I want to talk about one that's very important. The socio-cultural influence at that time.

[45 : 30] Germanic feudal culture. Right? Also important. You can't reduce it all down to theological ideas. Crusading wasn't a phenomenon that happened just to any old group of people.

Right? It wouldn't have sprung to life in any given culture necessarily. It was a phenomenon of what we know as Europe at that particular moment. It was birthed in a particular context, growing out of a particular set of customs and predilections in that culture.

This is one of the things that historian Carl Erdmann has powerfully argued in his own work in this area. Now, war occupied a central place in the culture and politics of Germanic successor states to the Roman Empire from the 5th century onwards.

War was very important in the business of politics. Now, while Christian missions were heavily engaged in the conversion of the Germanic peoples and their warlords, those who were involved in missions had to recognize and accommodate some of the primal values that they encountered in those cultures.

Right? Why did that happen? Why didn't the church push for greater sanctification? Right? Why didn't it challenge the cultural norms more aggressively? Muster opposition to those warring Germanic tendencies.

[46 : 44] In large part, for practical reasons. This is what the historians say. The political entities, the warlords, provided basic stability and organization in an otherwise chaotic world.

Right? Warlords managed a system of plunder and tribute and tribal dependencies that constituted society. Their armies were the sole source of justice, patronage, diplomacy, and political discipline. Right? So, the result of that, the church comes in on the mission. Right? And there's some accommodation that happens because that reality, as bad as it is, is in a sense at that moment, was necessary.

Right? And so, the armies at that time, therefore, continued to exist, but they began to march under the imprimatur of Christ. Right? Instead of being pagan armies. There's sort of a two-way exchange that goes on here.

The warrior ethic gets Christianized a little bit, but the church also gets militarized a little bit. When you build a bridge, the traffic goes both ways. Right?

[47 : 45] Now, out of that fusion, rose a series of oxymoronic phenomena. A few examples. You end up with bishops who take to the field in armor to fight and sometimes die.

Bishops who are head of their own armies. You end up with vicious secular lords acting as the patrons of monasteries and even becoming associate members of monastic orders. Right?

In these feudal centuries, the church often looked to these lords for protection. Right? In order to get that protection, they gave their blessing to the military campaigns of the lord that seemed to bring stability to the region.

Right? So, the church is trying to channel that battling, warring instinct into a somewhat noble cause. And we can see that very much at play in the sermons on crusading from Bernard of Clairvaux.

Right? We should note that there were then, as now, always those who dissented. Who thought this is a travesty. Way too much accommodation. In the period under consideration, the most vocal opponents of a militarized church were, no surprise, academics and monks.

[48 : 54] Thanks. Now, at the popular level, winding to a close here, galvanizing people for crusading.

It's just kind of interesting what a crusading rally looked like, getting people to sign up. These are the types of things that Bernard of Clairvaux was heavily involved with. He was sort of an attenor at traveling, and they'd have a, you know, sort of a big rally, and there'd be a big talk, and everyone would get excited.

So what did that actually look like? Let me tell you a few things about that. Preaching was a big part of it. Vital role in recruitment. And the preachers would basically take the papal bulls that called for a crusade and kind of expound on them and elaborate them and translate them into a tongue that the laity could understand.

They would have large canvas paintings displayed. This is Bernard. That's a print of Bernard preaching. That would show, the picture showing the Saracens trampling on the Holy Sepulcher.

Right? And just seeing that picture would make the blood pressure increase. Right? They would use relics. Right? A piece of a cross. If you go crusading, you might get one of these. Okay?

[50 : 03] They often gave out little cloth crosses. Right? Kind of tokens. You could pin it to you. It's like going to a political rally. You get your little button. Right? Kind of get into the spirit of things. And then, of course, on the way out, they would have large rolls of parchment where you could sign up.

Sign up. You want to get as many people signed up. And then sometimes they would have penance suspension rips that could be given out of those rallies. So on the ground, that's how support, you know, for the soldiering and all the people who provided the ancillary services, that's how it was galvanized.

Now, some of you may be thinking about the issue of crusading and how it relates to what we know as imperialism. And I want to say something about this in closing. There's a great historian at Cambridge, Jonathan Riley, who's done some wonderful work on how to interpret the crusades.

I've drawn a lot from him. For a while, crusading in the 20th century, crusading has been kind of explained through the rubric of imperialism. And Riley said, actually, that's a category mistake.

If you had a bird's eye view, it looks like imperialism. But crusading is really not imperialism. It's not proto-imperialism. It wasn't driven by avarice. It wasn't driven by a desire to, you know, just for endless territorial expansion and economic gain.

[51 : 17] There's lots of evidence to suggest to the contrary. The best contemporary point of comparison for crusading is Zionism. That's the best contemporary point of comparison.

It's more like Zionism than it is like imperialism or colonialism. Let me make the point here with a few observations. Crusading was expensive. If church subsidies weren't available, crusaders would often mortgage their properties at very high interest rates to finance their expeditions.

Typically, medieval lords and knights were driven. You know, the thing that got them out of bed in the morning was expanding their territory and influence. But crusading was an activity that subverted that.

Right? It was the great exception to normal business. And it often resulted in short-term and long-term loss and financial ruin for those who participated. Right? So there's no crude material profit that the crusaders gained and come back with.

The only benefits they really got, which were things that they prized, were relics, insurance of salvation, and a gain in certain type of social status. Right? So it's not really like imperialism or proto-imperialism.

[52 : 30] It's more like Zionism. Okay? Oh, yeah. Sorry, that was the slide. It's not like imperialism. We recognize that map.

So. All right. So I've got a couple minutes. Yeah, just a couple minutes.

If there's any questions or further reading and so forth, we'd like to take those. So the Zionism, would that be like a form of evangelizing in a certain form?

Well, Zionism, you know, which is something that's a live issue today for us, right? It's not necessarily a concern with evangelizing, right?

It's a concern with taking back places of significance to a particular people group. Even if you do that at great cost. Or if the potential gains aren't that significant. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

[53 : 26] Good question. Yes, sir. To the extent that these people actually regard land itself as holy, what you're touching now is holy. Very much so.

Do you say to what extent? Yeah. Yeah. Very much. To a great extent. Right? The medieval world and medieval spirituality is populated by holy places and holy things. So it's a sense.

It's a spirituality that's quite earthy, but not in the same way that the spirituality of the Old Testament is earthy. It's earthy, too, but in a different way. I would say medieval spirituality, and here I speak as a good Protestant, I would say it's it was quite earthy in a superstitious way.

And that's probably owing to the influence of certain pagan religions and ideas and assumptions about reality that were sort of imported into the church and kind of permitted to exist without necessarily being reshaped and reconfigured in light of what scripture says about God.

Yes. Wonderful talk. Thank you so much. Yeah, yeah. I loved watching your face while I was talking. You see, grief. Curiosity. Yeah. Thank you. What I was wondering is, what you've described is incredibly physical, a physical reality that I was not aware of before you even know I've seen the periods of your art history.

[54 : 45] Do you think that there's anything that can be drawn from this theology? You've shown us the flaws in it in terms of correct clarification. But are there not germs of things that could be taken on a metaphysical level about the spiritual warfare between, you know, good and evil, Christ and sin, in our own personal walks that you think could be distilled from some of what you're describing?

Things that the medieval world were very real. Yeah. And maybe we should be waken up to these realities in a completely really secularized world. Yeah. I'm just curious.

Yeah, sort of things of a sacramental nature, not just as it pertains to the sacraments, but kind of sacramentalism as a, what Charles Taylor might call, social imaginary.

Yeah. I do, yeah, I do sometimes. I think that we can, there are lots of people who lament and argue that any sense of that's been heavily eroded with modernity and with secularism.

So I am sympathetic, but it's not something that I've given considerable time and attention to. Yeah. The other thing, too, is that refusal for everything to be spiritualized, right?

[55 : 59] Well, that's a certain understanding of what that word means, right? I think biblically, to say something is spiritual does not mean it's non-material. We think that's how we use, if something's spiritualized, it means it's non-material.

But I don't think that's what it means biblically. I think biblical spirituality is very earthy in that sense. Is evil just spiritual as in pertaining to things unseen? No, it's not just that.

It is that, but it's more than that. And that play in the crusading outlook is that recognition. Do I think that recognition should be at play in our own attitude and outlook? Yes. Do I think that we should respond to it the way they did?

No. Does that make sense? Yes. I mean, there is objective, concrete evil and wickedness in this world, right? I tend to go with Miroslav Volf. There is that.

God will deal with that. And because we know that God will eventually deal with that, we don't.

Because God will pick up his sword, we don't pick up ours. That would be sort of how I'd come at it.

[56 : 55] Yeah. Miroslav Volf's written a wonderful book about it. He's at Yale. He's a great theologian. Yes, sir? I think you said that two opponents to the Crusades were the academics and the monks.

Yeah. And I'm wondering if you are suggesting that academics, we should rely on them to have good ideas and fall in line behind them.

Well, yes, I think we should, but not uncritically. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Something to compare that to. I remember reading a book by Ravi Zacharias, and he said that there's no idea so vile that you can't apply to an academic to support it.

Yeah. I mean, there's excesses everywhere. You know, I come from my culture of birth and upbringing is a culture that it's a very politically conservative place in the U.S., and there's kind of a low view of academics as people who whine all the time because they think they should get paid more than business people, and they don't.

You know, I've heard every sort of stereotype. I mean, there's a professor who really influenced me, and he had, I think, a sound and commendable defense of what he did.

[58 : 09] He's a Christian moral theologian who thinks through moral issues theologically, and does he think that he's vastly above everyone else?

No. He actually depends on people in the church, but he has a particular vocation where he has afforded the time to think through things and to ask how consistent they are with the gospel that we profess when we read the Bible and say the Nicene Creed, and that's an important vocation in the church, and it provides an important service, and so I don't think we should demean or stereotype or belittle that, but actually should welcome it, though critically.

Yeah. Does that help? Sure. So. Yes. Yeah, that's one of my next projects, is actually to kind of dig into some of the anti-Crusading literature of the period and to see what people there are saying.

I just haven't had time to get into it yet. Are there any names that any of us would have heard from the proper institutions? No, and I think those are going to be lesser well-known names, because they were sort of on the minority side.

But they are out there, and they can be found. I've got access to some good primary sources, which I can sift through to find. So if you want to know about that, email me in a few minutes. I've just been married, so. No, wait for this phrase.

[59 : 27] Wait for this phrase. Yeah. Crusades from the other side. Yeah, I like that. So, yeah. Yes, sir. Are there any parallels of that? Now, with Christians, in terms of environmentalism, being, you know, and the people that you guys are doing, you know, good materials, and the people that you are doing?

Oh, I haven't thought about that. It's a good question, though. Yeah, it's a good thing to think about, but I haven't thought about that. So, we'll take two more. Yeah. I think you had a hand first.

So, we'll... Yeah, you. Okay, thank you. Thank you so much for your presentation. I'm from a Jewish family, so reaching Jewish people is always on my heart.

And one of the questions that people are reaching Jewish people... I'm also a pastor of a church in Ottawa. So, one of the questions that we face in theology and how we do churches is a symbol of the cross.

Obviously, I love the cross. It's taken my salvation upon it. But in light of the cross becoming a symbol of the crusading venture, do you have any advice on, is it fair to remove the cross in your imagery when you're reaching Jewish people?

[60 : 39] Is it because of the crusade? Do you think that is... Is it fair? Absolutely it is.

I think you adapt missionally as you need to. I mean, biblical... Biblical religion, right? True religion has never been that tied up with visual things.

I mean, that's a big part of the Old Testament. So, I think you have a biblical license to do that. I think missionally, it would be wise to do that sometimes. In other situations, you have to ask yourself the question that we often ask when we do Christian work.

You're going to deal with symbols that are embattled and language that is embattled. You have two options. You can let it go, or you can try to salvage it and reclaim it. And those are often the decisions best made through prayer and in the midst of the work you're doing.

Yeah. Yes, ma'am. This was really very interesting, and you let the people out. Some of the grim or details, like the bloody flux killing so many of the pilgrims and so on, which is probably appropriate.

[61 : 50] But, you know, this appalling distortion of the faith that you're describing to us didn't stop after the last crusade. I think much of this we hear in a disguised or reinvented form in our leaders and our modern day.

I wonder if you'd like to comment on that. I would. That's one of the things I took away from this. It's often due when I engage with subjects in church history that make me as a Christian feel embarrassment or shame or that there's perhaps a need for present generations to acknowledge

the sins of past generations.

It's good to remember that as we do that to them, so to those who come after us, will probably do that to us in certain ways. And I have no doubt, for example, that the habits of consumerism that typify our societies might be something that future generations of Christians look back and say, how could the church be so complicit in that?

So does that mean that we're always totally blind? No. With N.T. Wright, I'm sort of a critical realist. We need a humble epistemology, but we are growing.

God is at work in the world. He is sanctifying us. We are seeing things as they are. So there is a real advance in the knowledge of salvation and what that means. But we do have blind spots.

[63 : 14] I'm sure there are many, many more questions, but I'm thoughtful that he has to be at another church sharing with them, so we probably have to give him up at this point. So I do want to thank you so much.

Yeah. Wonderful. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. And I think we've hooked him in for the spring crown. Part two, yes.

Thank you. Have a great day, everyone.