

49. THE CRUSADES (3) CHANGES TO EUROPE'S WAY OF LIFE.

These days, when an earthquake, flood or another disaster happens in Japan, Europe or wherever, the whole world knows about it within a few hours. That is possible through the modern forms of media available to us now. In those days, people did not have these modern means at their disposal. Because of that, they remained ignorant of what was happening in the world. Often they did not even know what was going on in their own country, and when they finally did hear something, weeks and months had already passed.

Travelling merchants were usually the ones to spread news and reports. Life was much more isolated then, and people usually had no idea what was happening in other countries. Nowadays, many of us travel, especially during the holidays. Years ago, people hardly travelled. It was too dangerous. Only a few individuals would see more of the world, but most people didn't leave their birthplace. The crusades changed this. Tens of thousands of people, rich and poor, nobles and slaves who otherwise would not have *thought* of travelling, began to travel to the Far Eastern countries.

THE BEGINNING OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Now they learned to know about different countries and people. They saw things that were unheard of in their own country. In Eastern countries, people cultivated crops the crusaders had never heard of.

They learned how to use them and took them back to their own countries in Europe. Just a few examples:

Before the crusades, rice was unknown in Europe, but the farmers grew rice in Southern Europe after the crusades.

Sugar was not known in Europe either. The crusaders also exported this crop to Europe. They also brought silk-worm breeding to Europe.

Leek and savoy cabbage came to Europe.



New crops, such as rice, sugarcane and leek came to Europe after the crusades

In those Eastern countries, the crusaders tasted spices, such as pepper, nutmeg, cinnamon, etc. They found those spices tasty and took them along to their own country. When they discovered that these would not grow in Europe because it was not warm enough, they fetched them from the Eastern countries.

And so, a flourishing trade began, and the ties with the Eastern countries grew. Educated people, who travelled there, studied the Eastern people's way of life: their habits, language and history. In that way, science also advanced.

The merchants also imported Eastern architecture and other things to the European countries. The people of Western Europe learned lots from the Eastern people.

When we consider all those things, the crusades have not been a total failure. Yes, we shudder at the thought of the enormous amount of unnecessary deaths. As previously mentioned, an estimated ten million people lost their lives due to the crusades, which is just terrible! The pope and emperor did not accomplish *their* foolish aim but successfully sent all those people, created for eternity, into death.

But *God did* attain His set purpose!

A NEW CLASS

In chapter 41, we told you about the Viking invasions.



The prosperity and wealth enjoyed in Europe during the reign of Charlemagne had vanished like snow before the sun. Treasures of gold

and silver were robbed and stolen by those ruffians. Harvests were trampled and destroyed. Villages and cities went up in flames. Of the hundreds and thousands of scattered farmhouses, only smoking piles of rubble remained, while the residents were either killed, abused or taken prisoner. Poverty and misery entered the prosperous European countries. The Vikings reduced the wealthy, well-to-do merchants to beggars.



Charlemagne provided a great measure of safety during his reign.

He severely punished criminals. But after he died, the Viking raids began, and it was not safe anywhere. Louis the Pious found

it impossible to maintain the laws his father had imposed so strictly. The result was that many people fled inside the strong walls of the castles of knights and nobles for safety. The knights allowed them in, but they had to enter the service of the lords of those castles. In this way, the number of slaves increased alarmingly.

Through the crusades, many slaves were freed. True, thousands never returned. The Turks had murdered many, and others had perished from hunger and misery. But others did come back and were released from slavery. They were free. Hadn't the pope promised that? Even those proud knights did not dare to oppose that papal command.

The liberated slaves began to work for themselves. That was an incredible luxury for them! Before the crusades, the nobles never paid them for their hard labour and often treated them worse than animals. But that was over.

One became a baker and tried to earn his crust that way. Another became a blacksmith.

'The hand of the diligent makes rich'. Prov 10:4

A third became a carpenter or mason.

Others enjoyed trading and made a livelihood as merchants.

Besides, various nobles voluntarily released their slaves, hoping they would keep working on the vast estates of their former masters, but now as paid labourers.

Those liberated slaves were called "The third class." Before the crusades, there were only two classes, namely, the clergy and the nobility or knights. The slaves did not count. But after the crusades, the liberated slaves *did* count; that's why they were called "the third class."

Many former slaves lived in groups and established more and more villages and cities. Yet that third class was often treated with contempt by the nobles. That was normal behaviour for the nobles. When they talked together about those former slaves, they scornfully called them: "blokes"(blockheads). Indeed, those nobles still wanted to be their boss.

Fortunately for the third class, the counts became their protectors. Those counts supported the third class. I will say no more about this, for that is outside the church history sphere.

The knights lived in their strong castles. They were safe behind their thick walls and deep moats. The counts ensured that the third class could also protect their city with a high wall and deep moats. We can still find their remains in many old places in Europe and view the well-made ancient gates.



The third class began to prosper because those people were not lazy. They worked from morning till evening. God tells us in His Word: "The hand of the diligent maketh rich." Although this is only a temporal promise, yet the Lord fulfilled it.

The third class became rich. Trade flourished and expanded constantly. You understand that these things brought significant changes to the social structure of that time.

This change was another result of the crusades, and it was an improvement.

NOT ALL CHANGES ARE GOOD

The crusades have had more after-effects, but they are not at all admirable. As a result of the



pilgrimages and the crusades, the veneration of relics significantly increased. The relic trade flourished, but those who traded in

relics committed so much fraud that it would be more accurate to speak of relic swindle. The worship of all sorts of worthless things and objects increased unbelievably.

Deceit flourished.

This deception revealed the utter foolishness of the people.

They believed ridiculous things as the gospel truth!

They had departed from the right way, and now God delivered them up to a spirit of error.

Whoever went on a crusade obtained complete forgiveness of sins from the pope. They called that "an indulgence". Indeed, the forgiveness of sin and guilt is possible, but the pope cannot do that; only God can forgive sins based on Christ's suffering and death. Besides, God *never* forgives sins without repentance; true upright repentance must precede forgiveness. Indeed, whoever does not know what true repentance is, does not even feel the *need* for forgiveness!

Whether anyone felt remorse for their sins or not, the people believed they obtained forgiveness by joining a crusade.

Poor, poor people who believed that!

The Roman clergy deceived them about their eternal destination!

Do you know who profited from those crusades? The church!

Knights and nobles could easily live from the produce of their fields. However, the general population at that time did not have much money

at their disposal. They did not need it either. They exchanged the produce of their fields and pastures for the things they needed.

But then the crusades happened. The knights did not only have to supply themselves with weapons but also their servants and subordinates. Besides, they had to take money along to buy the things they needed while travelling, and as it was a trip that would take months, they needed lots of it! But how would they get so much money?

The Jews, usually tradesmen, had money, but they were afraid to say so because the same people who wanted



money were persecuting them. The rage of the crusaders had also turned itself against them, and they were murdering Jews by the hundreds. Had they not nailed the Lord Jesus to the cross? Had they not rejected the Lord Jesus and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor?

Therefore, away with them! Whoever killed a Jew thought that he was performing a good work. So the Jews did not dare say anything. They did nothing to draw attention to themselves, kept quiet and carefully hid their money. There was a significant risk that the crusaders would take their money from them, but not if they could help it!

The church had money, too. She received that from the members who came to confess their sins. The pope had commanded that the church must help pay the cost of the crusades, but they didn't have anywhere near enough.

CORRUPT DEALINGS

Everyone who needed money went to the church. And yes, the church was willing to do business! Many knights sold large plots of land to the church or monasteries and got some money that way. But the church paid far too little. Those estates and other properties of the knights were much more valuable than what the church paid.



Monks Celebrating
<https://imgflip.com/>

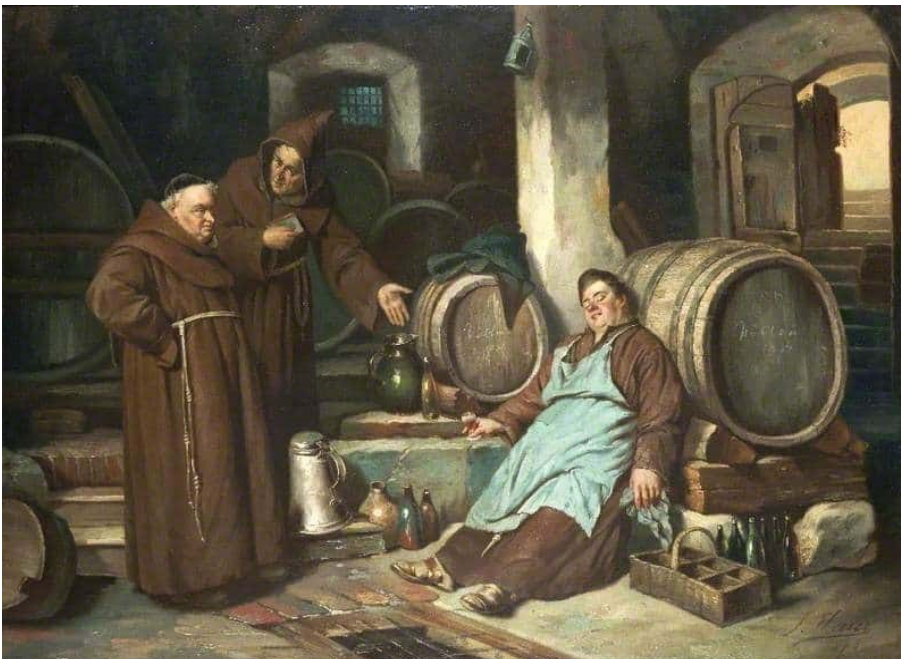
That's how many monasteries became wealthy. The church added vast parcels of land to their assets. In this way, the crusades made the church and its

monasteries very rich. They were rolling in wealth. In the monasteries, the monks celebrated with lavish banquets, which, alas, often degenerated into drinking parties and orgies. This use of their ill-gained wealth contributed to much corruption in the monasteries.

Many knights became poor, and after they returned, they could barely make ends meet. Many knights suffered poverty behind the walls of those solid and proud castles. He who has money has power.

Through those crusades, the power and influence of the Roman Catholic Church increased tremendously. That church has often abused its power. But more of that later.

These are some of the harmful effects of the crusades. I mention one more thing.



.....degenerated into drinking parties. <https://historycollection.com/>

RELIGIOUS KNIGHTHOODS

During the crusades and because of them, the Roman clergy set up various religious knighthoods.

Religious knighthoods? What are they?

In the land of Canaan, a lonely pilgrim slowly drags himself along beneath the burning hot sun. Full of courage, he had begun his travels. The journey has already lasted months, but he has not reached Jerusalem yet, the goal of his quest.

Sweat runs down his face. Fever is burning him up. He regularly stops, gasping for breath and trying to find the energy to keep going. Then he stumbles on. He feels sick and miserable. Because of the fever, his eyes have an unnatural glaze. They gaze wearily but longingly into the distance. He still ardently hopes to reach Jerusalem!

But his strength is exhausted. The time that he walks become shorter, and the rest periods become longer. A black haze appears before his eyes. His head throbs painfully. With a moan, he collapses and soon loses consciousness. There he lies, as dead on the side of the road.

Who will help him?

Look, some men suddenly appear. They are wearing a long *black* cloak with a



white cross attached.

They approach that lonely, sick person. They bend over him, and as they examine him, they put their hand on his chest. Yes, he is still alive. So they carefully lift him and carry him away. They bring him to the hospital, which they have built and lovingly nurse him. When the pilgrim finally awakens from his deep unconsciousness and looks around in surprise, he is no longer lying lonely and forsaken on the side of the road but finds he is in some sort of hospital! A friendly man, full of pity, bends over him and asks him if he feels any better and

wants anything to eat or drink. After a while, in good health again, the pilgrim leaves the hospital. Those men have saved his life!

The men in their black robes belong to a religious knighthood. Their purpose is to save sick pilgrims from certain death.

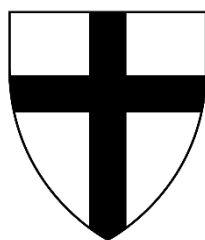
Another example.

In our thoughts, we join an army of crusaders who are marching to conquer Jerusalem from the infidel Muslims. But look, an army of Turks is charging straight for them!
They want to stop and destroy those crusaders!
The struggle is severe and bloody.
War cries fill the air.
Who will win this battle?

Fortunately, the crusaders repulse the Turks, and the Army of the Cross marches on victoriously. But on the deserted battlefield lie thousands of dead and wounded. Left behind on the battlefield, bleeding from many wounds, plagued by a terrible thirst, writhing with grief and pain, those poor men await death, for who shall help them? Who shall care for them in this hostile country?

Look, some men are coming. They are wearing a *white* cloak with a *black* cross attached. They walk about the abandoned battlefield, searching. They discover a wounded crusader who is dying of thirst. They kneel by him, carefully lift his weary head and pour some wine or water between his tightly clenched teeth. Then they wash the bleeding, dirty wounds, bandage them and carefully carry him away. They bring him to a hospital which they have built themselves and gently nurse him there. With this careful nursing and excellent treatment, the crusader recovers completely and leaves the hospital. These men have saved his life!

Those men in their white cloaks with a black cross also belong to a religious knighthood. Their purpose is to seek wounded crusaders, nurse them and save them from certain death.



A third example.

A small group of pilgrims is travelling slowly. They have been on the road for months already. They have braved many dangers. Their object? Jerusalem, of course!

There they will reverently kneel at the tomb of the Lord Jesus. They will kiss the ground where the Lord Jesus once walked.

Longingly their eyes search the hazy distance, searching for a glimpse of the towers of Jerusalem. No, nothing to see yet. They are making good progress. It won't be long now! But then?

Suddenly wild yells fill the air. The weary pilgrims turn pale. Terrified, they huddle together. A gang of Turks is charging straight for them! Their curved swords glitter in the sunlight.

'There comes another group of those Christian dogs!' they think. 'Wait, they'll teach *them* not to keep coming back to Jerusalem! Why don't they stay in their own country! What do they want anyhow?'

With an evil gleam in their eyes, they smirk wickedly. Loudly they cry out: "Allah is great, and Mohammed is his prophet."

Their eyes sparkle maliciously. That gang of Turks attacks the defenceless group of pilgrims. They will either kill them all or, what could be worse, capture them and sell them as slaves. They will never see their beloved country, their family, their friends and acquaintances again. Their bleeding bodies will lie unburied as prey for wild animals, or their future life must be dragged out in cruel slavery, being annoyed and ridiculed by their enemies who know no compassion. Who, who shall help those poor defenceless pilgrims?

No one?

Yes, oh yes!

Just look!

In a flying gallop, several knights approach. They are wearing long *white* cloaks with a *red* cross on them. Before the bewildered Turks realise what's happening, the group of knights attack. Many Turks plunge to the ground, mortally wounded.



The rest flee, leaving many dead and wounded behind. The knights in white robes chase the enemy, who retreat in disorder. Then they return to the waiting pilgrims, who,

with tears of joy in their eyes, grasp the hands of their deliverers and can't find the right words to thank them. Under their protection, they bravely continue their journey and soon reach Jerusalem. Those knights have delivered them out of great distress and saved their lives. Those horsemen, dressed in *white* cloaks with a *red* cross, also belong to a religious knighthood. Their purpose is to protect pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem against the attacks of the roaming Turks.

From these examples, it has become clear to us what those religious knighthoods were about.

But as previously stated, those crusades caused thousands of knights and nobles to march to war. In the Far East, those knights formed a type of union. This union became an order of knights. Therefore the name: "order of knighthood". Several different orders of knighthood began.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the pope is the vicar of Christ on earth.

"Well then," said the Knights of the Cross, "we fight under the sign of the cross, and now we ask the pope if we may come under his protection. He must have supervision over us."

Because those knighthoods became subject to the religious powers, they called them "religious knighthoods".

Each knighthood received its own colours to prevent confusion.

All the members of one knighthood wore a *black* cloak with a *white* cross.

The members of another knighthood wore a *white* cloak with a *black* cross.

The third order had a *white* cloak with a *red* cross.

Each knighthood had a specific purpose.

One group specialised in nursing the sick pilgrims. The next took on the task of caring for the wounded crusaders.

The third did its best to protect both the tomb of Jesus and pilgrims against the attacks of roaming Turkish gangs.

However, the crusades failed.

The Turks sent the religious knighthoods out of Palestine as well, but they didn't go far. They settled on the islands in the Mediterranean Sea. For decades they fought a bitter war against the intrusive Turks.

As they were under the supervision of the pope, they became his picked troops, under his direct command. Later on, the pope sometimes used them for other things as well. It will be good to remember this.

QUESTIONS

1. What effect did the Crusades have on the following:
 - a. Desire for travel
 - b. European food
 - c. Trade
 - d. The class structure of society
 - e. Trade in relics
 - f. The wealth of the church
 - g. Corruption of the monasteries
 - h. Slavery
 - i. Knighthoods
2. What effect did the liberated slaves have on the growth of cities?
4. Show how the word of the Lord, "The hand of the diligent maketh rich," came true in the lives of the third class.
5. What is an indulgence? Why was this practice wrong?
6. List three purposes of the religious knighthood.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. How would the growth of a third class and the growth of towns eventually reduce the pope's power?
2. What effect would the accumulation of wealth in the cities possibly have upon the slaves who became more and more wealthy? Read Proverbs 30. What is "Agur's portion"?