

THE CRUSADES AND JIHAD

Back in 1999 while our mission was being bombed by the National Islamic Front government in Sudan, fellow missionaries were organising "Reconciliation Walks" to the Middle East to apologise for "The Crusades". At the time, as our church services were under aerial and artillery bombardment by Jihadists, it seemed rather bizarre. Therefore I undertook a study of the crusades and Jihad.

Anin Maalouf in "The Crusades through Arab eyes" claims that the Crusaders conquest of Jerusalem in 1099 was "The starting point of a millennial hostility between Islam and the West." Islamic scholar John Esposito blames the Crusades for disrupting "Five centuries of peaceful coexistence elapsed before political events and an imperial papal power-play led to a centuries long series of so called Holy Wars that pitted Christendom against Islam and left an enduring legacy of misunderstanding and distrust." ("Islam: The Straight Path" OUP).

What Preceded The Crusades?

However the Crusades only started after five centuries of Islamic Jihad had conquered and annihilated, or forcibly converted, over two thirds of what had formerly been the Christian world. Shortly after the Islamic conquest of Jerusalem, in 638, Christian pilgrims were harassed, massacred, and early in the 8th Century, 60 Christian pilgrims from Amorium were crucified.

The Muslim governor of Caesarea seized a group of pilgrims from Iconium and had them all executed. Muslims extorted ransom money from Pilgrims, and threatened to ransack the most holy churches in Christendom such as the Church of the Resurrection - if they didn't pay exorbitant taxes. In the 8th Century a Muslim ruler banned all displays of the Cross in Jerusalem. He also increased the penalty tax (*Jizya*) and forbade Christians to engage in any religious instruction, even of their own children! In 772, the Caliph al Mansur ordered the hands of all Christians and Jews in Jerusalem to be branded.

In 789, Muslims beheaded a monk in Bethlehem, plundering the monastery and slaughtering many more Christians. In 923, a new wave of destruction of churches was launched by the Muslim rulers. In 937, Muslims went on a rampage in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday plundering and destroying the Church of Calvary and the Church of the Resurrection.

In 1004 the Fatimid Caliph Abu Ali al-Mansur al-Hakim unleashed a violent wave of church burning and destruction, confiscation of Christian property, and ferocious slaughter of both Christians and Jews. Over the next ten years, thirty thousand churches were destroyed and vast numbers of Believers were forcibly converted or killed.

In 1009, Al-Hakim ordered that the most holy churches in Christendom – the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem - be destroyed. He heaped humiliating and burdensome decrees upon Christians and Jews forcing Christians to wear heavy crosses around their necks, and Jews to have blocks of wood in the shape of a calf around their necks. Ultimately, he ordered Christians and Jews to either accept Islam or flee his areas of control.

Christians remained in a precarious position and under threat throughout the Middle East. When the Seljuk Turks swept into Jerusalem in 1077 they murdered over three thousand people, including many Christians. It was at this point that the Christian Emperor of Byzantium, Alexius I, appealed for help to the Western churches.

Pope Urban II challenged the knights of Europe at the Council of Clermont in 1095: "The Turks and Arabs have attacked our brethren in the East and have conquered the territory of Romania (the Greek Empire) as far as the shore of the Mediterranean and the Hellespont...have occupied more and more of the lands of those Christians and have overcome them in seven battles. They have killed and captured many and have destroyed the churches and devastated the Empire. If you continue to permit them to continue thus for a while with impunity, the faithful of God will be much more widely attacked by them. On this account I...persuade all people of whatever rank, foot soldiers and knights, poor and rich, to carry aid promptly to those Christians..."

Nowhere was the call for the launch of the Crusades talking about either conquest or conversion, they were merely to remove the Islamic invaders from the lands that had previously been Christian, to restore religious freedom to the Holy Lands.

Myths And Misconceptions

The politically correct dogma that the Crusades were unprovoked, imperialist actions against the peaceful, indigenous Muslim population is simply not accurate. Such propaganda reflects a hostility for Western civilization, and often against Christianity itself, rather than any actual historical research.

Similarly, the characterization of the Crusaders as greedy for loot, only out for personal gain, is simply out of touch with reality. Those who participated in the Crusades saw it as an act of sacrifice rather than of profit. The Crusades were in fact prohibitively expensive. Many Crusaders had to sell their property to raise money for the long journey to the Holy Land and knew that their chances of returning alive were slight. Most who did manage to survive and return came back with nothing material to show for their efforts.

Similarly the modern PC myth that the Crusaders attempted to forcibly convert Muslims to Christianity is a politically motivated fantasy. Search as one might through the writings and records of the Crusaders, one will not find any mention of Crusaders seeking to convert the Sarracens or the Turks. The Crusaders saw themselves as Pilgrims seeking to recapture and liberate Christian lands from vicious invaders.

Even Maalouf in *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes*, reports the observations of Spanish Muslim Ibn Jubayr who traversed the Mediterranean on his way to Mecca in the early 1180's and found that the Muslims were far better off in those lands controlled by the Crusaders than they were in Muslim ruled lands. And that Muslims preferred to live in the Crusader realms as those lands were more orderly and better managed.

Ibn Jubayr wrote: *"Whose lands were efficiently cultivated. The inhabitants were all Muslims. They live in comfort with the Franks – may God preserve them from temptation! Their dwellings belong to them and all their property is unmolested. All their regions, patrolled by the Crusaders in Syria are subject to the same system: The land that remains, the villages and farms, have remained in the hands of the Muslims. Now, doubt invests the hearts of a great number of these men when they compare their lot to that of their brothers living in Muslim territories. Indeed, the latter suffer from the injustices of their co-religionists, whereas the Franks act with equity."*

The Crusades have often been portrayed as European Colonialism, but the Crusader states were not ruled from Western Europe. The governments they established did not answer to any Western power. Nor did the Crusader rulers siphon off the wealth of their lands and send it back to Europe. No streams of settlers came from Europe to settle in these states, which were established only in order to provide permanent protection for Christians in the Holy Land.

The Merciful Saladin

The presentation of Muslim commanders such as Saladin as merciful and magnanimous is a myth. When Saladin captured the Crusaders at Hattin on 4 July 1187, he ordered the mass execution of all the Christians: *"They should be beheaded in accordance with Quran 47:4 'When you meet the unbelievers on the battlefield, strike their necks'"* Saladin's secretary Imad reported, *"With him were a whole band of scholars and Sufis and a certain number of devout men and aesthetes; each begged to be allowed to kill one of them and drew their swords and rolled back their sleeves. Saladin, his face joyful, was sitting on his dais; the unbelievers showed black despair."*

In 1148, the Muslim Commander Nur ed-Din ordered the slaughter of every Christian in Aleppo.

In 1268, when Mamluk Sultan Baybars seized Antioch, he ensured that all the men were slaughtered, the women sold into slavery, the crosses in every church smashed, the Bibles torn and burned, the graves of Christians desecrated, every monk, priest and deacon was dragged to the altar and had their throats slit where a mass had previously been celebrated, the Church of Saint Paul and the Cathedral of Saint Peter were destroyed and the bodies of the Christians burned.

When on 29 May 1453, the greatest city in the world of that time, Constantinople, was conquered by the Jihadists, the Muslims *"slew everyone that they met in the streets, men, women and children without discrimination. The blood ran in rivers down the steep streets from the heights of Petra toward the golden horn"*. The Muslim soldiers even entered the Hagia Sophia, and slaughtered thousands of Christians worshipping in what was then the largest church in the world at that time.

What Did The Crusades Achieve?

The Crusades bought Europe time. From the first century of Islam Muslim armies were invading Europe. Spain suffered under Islamic occupation for 8 centuries. In the 14th Century, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia, Albania and Croatia fell to Muslim invasions.

In 1426 the Egyptian Mamluks conquered Cyprus. In 1395 the Muslims conquered Nicopolis on the Danube River. In 1444 the Muslim armies seized Varna in Hungary. In 1456 the Turks besieged Belgrade, and even tried to

conquer Rome, but were thrown back. The Muslims first attempted to seize Vienna in 1529. As late as 11 September 1683 Muslim armies besieged Vienna, but were routed by 30 000 Polish Hussars (cavalrymen) led by Poland's King Jan III Sobieski.

Were The Crusades A Failure?

The constant depiction of the Crusades as a failure is not justified by the historical record. The Crusades succeeded in seizing the initiative, throwing the Muslim invaders onto the defensive, for the first time after five centuries of attack. The Crusaders bought Europe time – centuries in fact.

At a critical time, the Crusades united a divided Europe, and threw the Muslim invaders back, bringing a peace and security to Europe that had not been known for centuries. As a result of the tremendous sacrifices of the Crusaders, Christian Europe experienced Spiritual Revival and Biblical Reformation which inspired a great resurgence of learning, scientific experimentation, technological advancement, and movements that led to greater prosperity and freedoms than had ever been known in all of history.

For a picture of what Europe might be like today had Islam succeeded in conquering it, one can look at the previously Christian civilisations of Egypt and what is today called Turkey. The Copts in Egypt now make up just 10% of the total Egyptian population, and are severely oppressed. What is today called Turkey was once the vibrant Christian Byzantine Empire, the economic and military superpower of its day. Today the Christian civilization which had flourished there for a thousand years has all but been extinguished. The last Christian city in Asia, Smyrna, was massacred by the Turkish Army in 1922.

The classic Hollywood version of the Crusades as depicted in the \$150 million *Kingdom of Heaven* epic was produced in consultation with groups such as the Council on American – Islamic Relations.

Professor Jonathan Riley-Smith, author of *A Short History of The Crusades* described the film as *"Rubbish!...it's not historically accurate at all...it depicts the Muslims as sophisticated and civilized and the Crusaders are all brutes and barbarians. It has nothing to do with reality."*

Without the Crusades it is questionable whether Europe or American would even exist.

The Crusades ended over 700 years ago. Islamic Jihad continues to this day.

The popular misconceptions about the crusades are that these were aggressive wars of expansion fought by religious fanatics in order to evict Muslims from their homeland, and force conversions to Christianity. However the historical record does not support those assertions.

A Reaction To Jihad

The crusaders were reacting to over four centuries of relentless Islamic Jihad, which had wiped out over 50% of all the Christians in the world and conquered over 60% of all the Christian lands on earth – before the crusades even began . Many of the towns liberated by the crusaders were still over 90% Christian when the crusaders arrived. The Middle East was the birthplace of the Christian Church. It was the Christians who had been conquered and oppressed by the Seljuk Turks. So many of the towns in the Middle East welcomed the crusaders as liberators.

Far from the crusaders being the aggressors, it was the Muslim armies which had spread Islam from Saudi Arabia across the whole of Christian North Africa into Spain and even France within the first century after the death of Muhammad. Muslim armies sacked and slaughtered their way across some of the greatest Christian cities in the world, including Alexandria, Carthage, Antioch and Constantinople. **These Muslim invaders destroyed over 3,200 Christian churches just in the first 100 years of Islam.**

Defensive Wars

As Professor Thomas Madden in *The Real History of the Crusades* points out: *"The crusades to the East were in every way defensive wars. They were a direct response to Muslim aggression – an attempt to turn back, or defend against, Muslim conquests of Christian lands. Christians in the 11th Century were not paranoid fanatics. Muslims really were gunning for them...Islam was born in war and grew the same way. From the time of Muhammad, the means of Muslim expansion was always by the sword...Christianity was the dominant religion of power and wealth...The Christian world therefore was a prime target for the earliest Caliphs and it would remain so for Muslim leaders for the next thousand years...The crusades...were but a response to more than four*

centuries of conquests in which Muslims had already captured over two thirds of the Christian world." **Without the Crusades it is questionable whether Europe or America would even exist.**

Thinking The Unthinkable

As the London Telegraph pointed out: "A more realistic view of history requires less retrospective fantasy and more brain work. It means forcing your head around to see what motivated men and women centuries ago. Try to think the unthinkable – that the Crusaders were right, and that we should be grateful to them."

Christian Love And Self Sacrifice

Professor Jonathan Riley-Smith explains that crusading was "an act of love" for one's neighbour. An act of mercy to right a terrible wrong. As one church leader wrote to the Knights Templar: "You carry out in deeds the words of the Gospel, 'greater love than this hath no man, than that he lay down his life for his friends'."

Professor Riley-Smith points out that the goals of the crusades were firstly to rescue the Christians of the East: "Many thousands of Christians are bound in slavery and imprisoned by the Muslims and tortured with innumerable torments." And secondly the liberation of Jerusalem and other places made holy by the life of Christ.

The Medieval crusaders saw themselves as pilgrims, restoring to the Lord Jesus Christ His property. "The Crusaders conquest of Jerusalem, therefore, was not colonialism, but an act of restoration and an open declaration of one's love of God...It is often assumed that the central goal of the crusades was forced conversion of the Muslim world. Nothing could be further from the truth. From the perspective of Medieval Christians, Muslims were the enemies of Christ and His Church. It was the Crusaders' task to defeat and defend against them. That was all. Muslims who lived in crusader won territories were generally allowed to retain their property and livelihood and always their religion."

Against All Odds

When we think about the Middle Ages, we inevitably view Europe in the light of what it became rather than what it was. The fact is that the superpower of the Medieval world was Islam, not Christendom. The crusades were a battle against all odds with impossibly long lines of supply and crippling inadequate logistics. It was a David against Goliath enterprise from the beginning. The chances of success for the first crusade were highly improbable. They had no leader, no chain of command, no supply lines and no detailed strategy. The first crusade consisted simply of thousands of dedicated warriors marching deep into enemy territory, thousands of kilometres from home. Many of them died of starvation, disease and wounds. It was a rough campaign that always was on the brink of disaster .

"Yet it was miraculously successful. By 1098, the Crusaders had liberated Nicea and Antioch to Christian rule. And in July 1099 they re-conquered Jerusalem and began to rebuild a Christian state in Palestine."

A Judgement Of God

When Jerusalem fell to Saladin in 1187, Christians across Europe perceived that God was punishing them for their sins. Numerous lay movements sprang up throughout Europe dedicated to purifying Christian society so that it may become worthy of victory in the East.

Professor Madden, of St. Lewis University and the author of *A Concise History of the Crusades*, has observed: "From the safe distance of many centuries, it is easy enough to scowl in disgust at the crusades. Religion, after all, is nothing to fight wars over. But we should be mindful that our Medieval ancestors would have been equally disgusted by our infinitely more destructive wars fought in the names of political ideologies...Whether we admire the Crusaders or not, it is a fact that the world we know today would not exist without their efforts. The ancient faith of Christianity, with its respect for women and antipathy toward slavery, not only survived but flourished. Without the crusades, it might have followed Zoroastrianism, another of Islam's rivals, into extinction." **But for the crusades Europe would have probably fallen to Islam and the USA would never have come into existence.**

Learn To Discern

Dr. Ted Baehr of Movieguide warns viewers to be "media wise enough to reject revisionist history" such as the Kingdom of Heaven. " The problem is that the future generations could accept this politically correct, anti-Christian propaganda."

Hollywood's Crusade Against History

Ridley Scott's blockbuster epic "*Kingdom of Heaven*" presents one of the worst distortions of history seen on any screen in recent years. Focusing on the fall of Jerusalem, in AD1187, to Saladin's Muslim armies, this anti-Christian, politically correct revisionism gets everything wrong.

Who Cares About Geography?

First of all, Scott's *Kingdom of Heaven* has its geography very wrong. We know that the film was shot in Spain and Morocco, and it shows. Most people should know that Jerusalem is **not** in the middle of the Sahara Desert! Yet, in his film Jerusalem's high walls are surrounded by sand dunes, without a tree, a bush or a blade of grass. The Mount of Olives, the Kidron Valley and the Valley of Hinnon are nowhere to be seen. Unlike the Crusaders who liberated Jerusalem in 1099, Saladin's Army has no problem moving his siege engines and assault towers right up to the walls of Jerusalem, because Scott's Jerusalem in *Kingdom of Heaven* is not surrounded by valleys or ditches.

This film also boldly asserts that Messina was the seaport to the Holy Land. As Messina is on the Island of Sicily, one wonders why French crusaders would, or how they could, depart from there. In fact Genoa, Venice and Naples were the ports which crusaders set sail from.

This is a True Story – Only the Facts Have Been Changed

Kingdom of Heaven also distorts history beyond all recognition. The "hundred-year truce" between the Christian and Muslim armies is a figment of their imagination. The warfare throughout the 12th Century was incessant.

The depiction of the Knight's Templar as a band of religious fanatics trying to shatter the truce and provoke war with the Muslims by attacking caravans, is a total fabrication. No Knight's Templar ever attacked any caravans. Attacking caravans is what the founder of Islam, Muhammad, engaged in regularly. As did his handpicked apostles, the Caliphas. The Knights Templar were formed primarily to protect travellers from the attacks of the Muslim army. In fact it was the slaughter of Christian pilgrims, by Muslim armies, in violation of earlier agreements of safe passage, that precipitated the crusades in the first place.

The central figure of this film, Sir Balian, is a historical figure, who did in fact play a critical role in the defence of Jerusalem in 1187, but the film script distorts his character and role beyond all recognition. First of all, Balian was not a blacksmith, nor did his wife commit suicide, nor was he illegitimate, nor raised as a commoner. His father, Balian the Old (not Godfrey as in the movie), had three sons, all legitimate: Hugh, Baldwin and Balian. Balian never had to travel to the Holy Land, because he grew up as part of the nobility there. Balian was married to royalty long before the events portrayed in the film, and he was not at all romantically involved with the Princess Sybilla. (Although his brother, Baldwin, had some love interest in Sybilla).

In *Kingdom of Heaven*, Balian is portrayed as questioning whether God exists, although according to the historical records it is clear that Balian was a dedicated Christian who took his faith very seriously. Nor did Balian desert the defence of the Holy Land following the fall of Jerusalem. Far from returning to France, Balian proceeded to Beirut in Lebanon which he helped fortify against Muslim invasion. He was present with Richard the Lionhearted at the signing of the peace with Saladin, which secured safe passage for Christian pilgrims and recognised crusader control over the 90 mile stretch of coastline from Tyre to Jaffa.

According to *Kingdom of Heaven*, the real hero in the story is the famous Muslim general, Saladin (1138 – 1193). Although an exceptionally gifted military strategist and unusually chivalrous, the film has uncritically accepted, and embellished, the legends about Saladin beyond what the historical record would support. A Muslim Kurd, from Northern Iraq, Saladin was raised in a privileged family, and was very ambitious. At age 14 he joined his uncle's military staff, and at 31 followed him to Egypt where his uncle was Grand Vizier. When his uncle died two months later, Saladin seized power, defeated competing Muslim leaders and started a dynasty which established Egypt as the major Muslim power in the Middle East.

Far from having war forced upon him, Saladin initiated the conflict by declaring a Jihad against the Christians. He swept throughout Palestine capturing more than 50 crusader castles in two years. At the battle of Hattin on 4 July 1187 Saladin's army defeated the Christians on the shores of Lake Tiberius (the Sea of Galilee) – although in the film this battle is depicted as in waterless desert! Far from being the magnanimous victor depicted in modern legends and this film, Saladin was a ruthless general who had thousands of Christian prisoners beheaded in cold blood – including after the battle of Hattin.

In the film, Saladin is portrayed as being most gracious in allowing the defenders of Jerusalem safe passage. In fact after the negotiated surrender of Jerusalem, which the Patriarch of Jerusalem initiated, Saladin demanded

that every man, woman and child in Jerusalem pay a ransom for his or her freedom or face the grim prospect of Islamic slavery. In order to save the lives and liberty of the poor people who could not afford the heavy ransom demanded by Saladin, Balian paid out of his own resources the ransom required for those who could not afford it.

Twisted Theology

The theology in *Kingdom of Heaven* is also all wrong. The film depicts some monk standing by the roadside repeating: "To kill an infidel is not murder it is the path to heaven!" As any student of the Bible would be able to tell you, neither the concept nor those words appear anywhere in the Christian Bible. However, as any student of the Quran should be able to inform you, that is exactly what the Islamic doctrine of Jihad teaches.

At one point early in the film as Muslims bow in prayer towards Mecca, Balian comments: "You allow them to pray?" A knight sneers and answers: "As long as they pay their taxes!" In fact the crusaders never required any extra taxes of Muslims in order to allow them to pray. That is the Islamic doctrine and practice of *Jizya*. To this day Muslim governments require *Jizya* – tribute taxes – of *dhimmi's* (Jews and Christians under their Islamic rule).

Before the crusaders march out to the disastrous battle of Hattin, the film has one knight declaring: "The army of Jesus Christ cannot be beaten." However, there is no such doctrine in the Bible, or in Christian theology. It is, in fact, Islamic dogma that no Muslim army can never be defeated by an infidel army. This Muhammad asserted on the authority of Allah himself. (Something which the recent defeats, of the Taliban, in Afghanistan, and Saddam Hussein's Muslim military superpower of the Middle East, Iraq, by the Americans has precipitated a serious theological problem for Islamic scholars).

Insults to Intelligence

Quite aside from the factual errors in geography, the attributing of Islamic doctrine to the Christians, and the blatant distortion of history, the *Kingdom of Heaven* is an insult to the intelligence of its viewers in terms of its preposterous script.

Here we are expected to believe that: Balian is grieving his wife's death, yet he does not even attend to her burial; that Balian raised a commoner, trained only as a blacksmith, from France, could within days of arriving in Palestine be teaching the local people how to practice agriculture and dig wells in the desert; and that this blacksmith with no military training could know more about siege weapons and military strategy than all the knights and military professionals concentrated in the Holy Land put together! Just where would a blacksmith have learnt all about siege engines, trebuchets, cavalry tactics and defensive strategy?

The fictional, adulterous relationship depicted between Balian and Princess Sybilla strains all credibility. As does Balian's presumed ethical objections against executing the venomous and bloodthirsty husband of his presumed adulterous interest! Apparently justice and the avoiding of a disastrous war were not as important as his adulterous affections.

Aside from the terrain around Jerusalem being so conveniently flat for the invading armies, the depicted firepower and range capabilities of the catapults and trebuchets are ridiculous. Steel cranes with three-inch titanium cables would have trouble sustaining the weight and strain with which these 12th Century wooden and rope trebuchets were meant to have pulverised the thick walls of Jerusalem! The film makers of *Kingdom of Heaven* try to make up for a lack of script and character development by overdosing on computer generated explosions and fictional firepower capabilities. (Actually maximum range for a 12th Century catapult would have been 150 yards with a 300 pound rock).

And how can any viewer with a grasp of history or military tactics swallow the kind of tactics and strategy dished up in films like *Kingdom of Heaven*? What soldiers throw their shields away just before engaging a massive assault by the enemy?! Apparently, Orlando Bloom wanted his long flowing locks to flow in the breeze, but seriously, what knight would throw his helmet away just before engaging in hand to hand combat?!

Also, as any student of history and anthropology should be able to tell you, the crusaders did not burn the bodies of their dead. That was the practice of the Vikings, the ancient Greeks and the Hindus, but not of the Christians who buried their dead.

The ridiculous speech with its feel good "why can't we all just get along" drivel dished up by Orlando Bloom's Balian on the walls of Jerusalem (while Saladin's armies politely delay their attack until he has finished) may sound believable to some 21st Century Humanist, but these were not the convictions or sentiments of any 12th Century crusader. As for the pathetic egalitarian gesture of knighting everybody – without any training, testing or

code of conduct – is so unhistorical, and so out of touch with reality, as to make one wonder what drugs the scriptwriter was on at the time.

Then there's that shipwreck. To expect us to believe that the hero of the film could go down with the ship in high seas, and awake the next morning alive and well, on the shore – with the entire crew and every passenger, and every horse dead, and neatly deposited on the shore – is ludicrous. Especially that the only survivors of the shipwreck were the hero, and his horse! And of course, very conveniently, his father's sword was not the kind of heavy sword that would sink to the bottom of the ocean, but was also neatly deposited next to this sole survivor!

Crusade Against Christianity

The ridiculous and inane comments attributed to the bishop in the film are also not only highly unlikely, but jarringly anachronistic. Producer Ridley Scott, and scriptwriter William Monahan, obviously hate Christianity. But, just in case any viewers lack the discernment to detect the unveiled anti-Christian hostility and prejudice, which permeates the entire movie, Ridley Scott, has gone on record as stating: *"Balian is an agnostic, just like me."* Of course there was no such thing as agnosticism in the 12th Century, especially not amongst crusaders. The word *"agnostic"* was a 19th Century invention.

Just in case anyone misunderstood the motivations behind his movie, Ridley Scott has been quoted as saying: *"If we could just take God out of the equation, there would be no f... problem!"*

Entertainment or Exploitation?

Considering how few people today read history books, and how most depend entirely on these kind of *"based on a true story – the names and the places are true – only the facts have been changed to protect the guilty"* films, for their understanding of the past, this kind of blind prejudice and obsessive hatred against Christianity on the part of producers and directors should be frightening. As Karl Marx declared: *"The first battlefield is the rewriting of history."* I'm sure that all the enemies of Christianity are delighted with propaganda pics like Kingdom of Heaven.

The Facts of History

The fact is that the crusades of the Middle Ages were a reaction to centuries of Islamic Jihad. In the first century of Islam alone Muslim invaders conquered the whole of the previously Christian North Africa destroying over 3200 churches – in just 100 years. In the first five centuries of Islam, Muslim forces killed Christians, kidnapped their children to raise them as Muslims, or compelled people at the point of the sword to convert to Islam . Up to 50% of all the Christians in the world were wiped out during the first three centuries of Islam. The Saracens (as the Muslim invaders were called) desecrated Christian places of worship and were severely persecuting Christians. Pilgrims were then prevented from visiting those places where our Lord was born, was crucified and raised from the dead. It was only after four centuries of Islamic Jihad that the crusades were launched as a belated reaction to the blatant Islamic Jihad.

Logistics and Economics

As the Christian History Institute has pointed out, the characterising of crusaders as only in it for the plunder and the loot betrays an ignorance of both geography and history. The vast majority of the crusaders were impoverished and financially ruined by the crusades. Crusaders, through great sacrifice and personal expense, left their homes and families to travel 3000km across treacherous and inhospitable terrain – and the shortest crusade lasted 4 years. Considering that only 10% of the crusaders had horses, and 90% were foot soldiers, the sheer fact of logistics is that the crusaders could not possibly have carried back enough loot to have made up for the loss of earnings and high expenses involved with these long crusades. Many crusaders lost their homes and farms to finance their involvement in the crusades.

There's More to Life than Money

Perhaps self-seeking materialistic agnostics in the 21st Century cannot understand that some people could be motivated by something other than personal financial enrichment, but the fact is that many people make sacrifices for their religious convictions, and in order to help others. In the case of the crusaders, the historical record makes clear that amongst the motivations that led tens of thousands of volunteers to reclaim the Holy Land was a sense of Christian duty to help their fellow Christians in the East whose lands have been invaded and churches desecrated by Muslim armies, and a desire to secure access to the Holy Lands for pilgrims. There was also a desire to fight for the honour of their Lord Jesus Christ, Whose churches had been destroyed and Whose Deity had been denied by the Mohammadan aggressors. In other words, **to the crusaders this was a defensive war to reclaim Christian lands from Muslim invaders.**

We may not share their convictions, or agree with their methods, but we ought to evaluate them in the light of the realities of the 11th and 12th centuries, and not anachronistically project our standards and politics back upon them.

The Missing Jihad

Scriptwriter William Monahan, and Director Ridley Scott, obviously don't understand the motivations behind the crusaders, and apparently they do not understand the Islamic doctrine of *Jihad* either – which the film makes no reference to. Considering that Jihad was the central threat that had led to the reaction of the crusades, this omission is inexplicable. *Kingdom of Heaven* preoccupies itself with fictionalising crusader atrocities, but it ignores the pattern of the preceding five centuries of genocide and aggression by Islamic armies. For those wanting the politically incorrect rest of the story which *Kingdom of Heaven* does not even hint of, you would want to read [Slavery, Terrorism & Islam – The Historical Roots & Contemporary Threat](#).

Scott's *Kingdom of Heaven* is politically correct, anti-Christian, pro-Muslim propaganda. It makes poor entertainment and is a worthless distortion of reality.

MOHAMMED VS CHRIST

In his article "*Self Hate, Revisionist History and Christophobia in the movie Kingdom of Heaven*" Dr. Ted Baehr notes some of the differences between Mohammed and Christ:

"Mohammed was the prophet of war; Christ is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Mohammed's disciples killed for the faith; Christ's disciples were killed for their faith (Acts 12:2; 2 Tim. 4:7).

Mohammed promoted persecution against the "infidels"; Christ forgave and converted the chief persecutor (1 Tim. 1:13-15).

Mohammed was the taker of life; Christ is the giver of life (John 10:27-28).

Mohammed and his fellow warriors murdered thousands; Christ murdered none but saved many (John 12:48).

Mohammed's method was COMPULSION; Christ's aim was CONVERSION (Acts 3:19).

Mohammed practiced FORCE; Christ preached FAITH (John 6:29, 35).

Mohammed was a WARRIOR; Christ is a DELIVERER (Col. 1:13; 1 Thess. 1:10).

Mohammed said to the masses, "Convert or die!"; Christ said, "Believe and live!" (John 6:47; 11:25-26).

Mohammed was swift to shed blood (Rom. 3:15-17); Christ shed His own blood for the salvation of many (Eph. 1:7).

Mohammed preached "Death to the infidels!"; Christ prayed "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Mohammed declared a holy war (Jihad) against infidels; Christ achieved a holy victory on Calvary's cross (Col. 2:14-15) and His followers share in that victory (John 16:33).

Mohammed constrained people by conquest; Christ constrained people by love (2 Cor. 5:14).

Modern terrorists derive their inspiration from Mohammed and carry out their despicable atrocities in the name of his god; Christians derive their inspiration from the One who said, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9).

Modern day disciples of Mohammed respond to the terrorist attacks by cheering in the streets; modern day disciples of Christ are deeply grieved at past atrocities carried out by those who were "Christians" in name only (the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, etc.).



Many Muslims are peaceful and peace-loving because they do not strictly follow the teachings of their founder; many Christians are peaceful and peace-loving because they do strictly follow the teachings of their Founder (Rom. 12: 17-21).

Mohammed called upon his servants to fight; Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world; if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight . . . but now is My kingdom not from here" (John 18: 36)

*Mohammed ordered death to the Jews (see A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, Oxford University Press [1975], p. 369); Christ ordered that the Gospel be preached "to the Jew first" (Rom. 1: 16).*

The Koran says, "Fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them" (Qu'ran 9.5); Christ said, "Preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16: 15).

Mohammed's mission was to conquer the world for Allah; Christ's mission was to conquer sin's penalty and power by substitutionary atonement (2 Cor. 5: 21; 1 Pet. 3: 18).

Mohammed claimed that there was but one God, Allah; Christ claimed that He was God (John 10: 30-31; John 8: 58-59; John 5: 18; John 14: 9).

Mohammed's Tomb: OCCUPIED! Christ's tomb: EMPTY! "

JIHAD VS THE GOSPEL

The word "*crusade*" does not appear in the Bible, nor is it commanded in Christianity. However, *Jihad* is the sixth pillar of Islam and the second greatest command of Muhammad. It is not only commanded, but commanded in the Quran.

The crusades ended many centuries ago. However Islamic Jihad is carried out to this day. Millions of Christians have been slaughtered throughout the centuries by Islamic militants – such as the 1.5 million Armenians murdered in Turkey in 1915. Christians have continued to be slaughtered by Islamic militants in Indonesia, the Philippines, Sudan and Nigeria to the present day.

Therefore, before Christians fall over themselves to apologise for the crusades, which ended over 700 years ago, it would be wise to first learn from reliable sources what the crusades were all about, and study the Islamic teachings and track record of Jihad over the last 14 centuries . "[Slavery, Terrorism and Islam – The Historical Roots and Contemporary Threat](#)" would provide a good introduction. Those who do not know their past have no future.

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The above text is most of what was presented by Peter Hammond at the Universities in Minnesota. The CD's on his presentation and the open discussion times with the students is available from:

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