

## TRANSCRIPT

An Undeceptions podcast.

John Dickson:

In October 2020, Samuel Paty, a history teacher in the suburbs of Paris was decapitated. A month earlier, he'd shown one of his classes an insulting caricature of the Prophet Muhammad published in the French magazine, Charlie Hebdo. He was trying to illustrate the type of free speech that is protected in France. In this case, religious satire. A parent took issue with showing the image. In Islam, images of the Prophet are strictly forbidden, as is insulting Muhammad. The dispute became very public, and a radicalized 18-year-old took tragic revenge.

John Dickson:

In response to the attack, French president Emmanuel Macron announced further crackdowns on Muslims thought to have links to radical groups. In one media interview, Macron called Islam a religion in crisis. His comments stoked what was already a simmering feud between France and Muslim majority countries, particularly Turkey. Insults were thrown between Macron and the Turkish president Erdoğan. Erdoğan promptly found himself the subject of a Charlie Hebdo caricature the next week.

Speaker 2:

Adding fuel to the fire, this cartoon mocking president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan published by French satirical magazine, Charlie Hebdo, has sparked fury in Turkey. Accusing the publication of sowing the seeds of hatred and animosity. Ankara has vowed to take legal and diplomatic action. Erdoğan, meanwhile said he had not seen the caricature himself and accused Western countries of launching a crusade against Islam in a speech to his AK party members in parliament.

John Dickson:

The west was once again, headed to a period of barbarity, said Erdoğan, describing colonial powers as murderers for their record in Africa and the Middle East. They literally want to relaunch the Crusades, he declared. Since the Crusades, the seeds of evil and hatred have started falling on these Muslim lands, and that's when peace was disrupted. 923 years after the launch of the first crusade, world leaders, like the Turkish president and others, are still invoking the memory of the Crusades to explain ongoing conflict. How plausible is that? What were the Crusades? How did they start? What did they achieve and why did they stop, and does their shadow really fall over modern tensions between the west and Muslim lands? All of that across this special two-part episode. I'm John Dickson, and this is Undeceptions.

John Dickson:

Undeceptions is brought to you by Zondervan's brand-new book, Bullies and Saints: An Honest Look at the Good and Evil of Christian History, by some guy called John Dickson. Every episode, Undeceptions explores some aspect of life, faith, history, culture, or ethics, that's either much misunderstood or mostly

forgotten. With the help of people who know what they're talking about, we'll be trying to undeceive ourselves and let the truth out.

John Dickson:

Religion starts most of the wars of history. That was the very firm claim of the man sitting opposite me at a sumptuous lunch at a friend's house overlooking one of Sydney's lovely harbors. The conversation started as they often do in my life with my acquaintance asking me what I did for a living. It either kills the conversation or ignites it. I mumbled something about, "Oh, I research and lecture about history and religion." He explained he didn't have much time for faith. When I asked him why, he told me plainly, "Religion starts most of the wars of history." I naturally probed a little, "Which ones?" I said.

John Dickson:

He paused, thought about it for a moment and said, "Well, there's the Crusades." Another pause, "And the troubles of Northern Ireland too." These were his only two examples. I'm not sure about the troubles, have listened to our single from a little while ago for more on that one. I feel inclined to give him the Crusades though. They were religious wars, they were Christian wars and they were pretty awful as we'll see. Whether we're a Christian or sceptical, chances are much of what we think we know about the Crusades is just wrong. Well, so says my guest today. Prof. Tyerman, you've written that most of what passes in public as knowledge of the Crusades is either misleading or false. Were you just being provocative or what are the myths we need to be undeceived about?

Prof. Tyerman:

Well, I think particularly the broadest one is that the Crusades form part of some eternal clash of civilizations.

John Dickson:

Christopher Tyerman is professor of the history of the Crusades at Herford College University of Oxford. In the English-speaking world, there's no one more widely recognized in this field. He's written over eight books on this topic, but perhaps his Magnum Opus is the thousand-plus page, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades*, published by Harvard University Press.

Prof. Tyerman:

There is some eternal conflict between what some people construct as Western values and what some people construct as Eastern values. As soon as you put it in those terms, of course, it's meaningless. What is the west and what is the east? There is a popular perception in particular, vis á vis, Christianity and Islam, that the Crusades form part of a contest that goes back to the early days of Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries, and some people say continues today. 9/11, ISIS, et cetera, etcetera. This of course is totally anti-historical and corrosive in historical terms. Although, of course, the perception of this contest informs current emotions and sentiments on both sides, if you like.

Prof. Tyerman:

Western apologists will say, "Oh, well, there's always this maligned threat to Western values from Islam." Particularly the near east, there is the perception that foreigners, particularly from the west, from Europe and now the United States, are constantly trying to take our land under the bogus pretence of their superior values. I think that's a fundamental misunderstanding. We should locate the Crusades in their own time, their own place and their own causation. I suppose, there are minor within that. There are minor misconceptions about motives, about the details of campaigns, about portraying some crusade leaders as great heroes or villains. Portraying some opponents of the Crusades as heroes or villains.

Prof. Tyerman:

I think it's nicely put at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, and it was pointed out when the French were demanding a mandate in Syria because of their historical links through the Crusades. They were asked just who won the crusades, and they were sort of ignored, of course. The rights of the local leaders were ignored. The past has two, in sense, realities. One, is its own reality of the past. The other is a constructed reality in the present, which shifts. The Crusades, of course, have become, since 9/11, in particular, rather toxic in that context. I suppose why I made that provocative remark was in the sense to remind people that the past is the past, it's not the present. The past is not defined by the present. Many popular historical works assume the reverse.

John Dickson:

Tyerman is urging us to take history as history. The Crusades were not a precursor to modern conflicts in the Middle East. There are parallels, yes. As Tyerman notes, the point about parallel lines is that they don't meet. Modern politicians, like the Turkish president, Erdoğan, just last year, US president, George W. Bush, after the September 11 attacks, or the French at the Paris Peace Accord following World War I, have all invoked the Crusades for their own means. This often conceals the real political, economic and territorial concerns.

John Dickson:

The real historical Crusades have nothing to do with modern politics, but there's probably no escaping the reputational damage the Crusades have brought upon Christianity. Of course, that does continue today, as my lunch companion made clear. Let's wind back, where did the Crusades come from? They certainly didn't pop out of nowhere. Pope Urban II, the instigator of the first crusade, didn't wake up one morning and invent the notion of Holy War out of whole cloth. There is a tale to tell of compromise and distraction.

John Dickson:

Let's go back to the 11th century, and of course, before. What were some of the theoretical precursors to the notion of Christian Holy War? I mean, if some of my listeners have opened up Matthew chapters five to seven, they don't see Jesus waxing lyrical on holy war too much.

Prof. Tyerman:

No, they don't. There, I suppose two strands, intellectual strands that lead to this development of holy war. One, is the classical tradition. You have Aristotle, for example, the Greek philosopher, talking about just war. Talking about the just end of war. If war is fought to preserve or create peace, that is a justified use of violence. You then have Roman law, people like Cicero, who add to that. The idea of the just cause, that there's a just aim, there's also just cause if you want to assert your rights. Peace, obviously, comes from the Latin word for doing a deal.

Prof. Tyerman:

You have a theoretical construct, particularly associated with the state due public authority. Legitimate authority can authorize war for good reasons, for good ends for the public good. It is interesting that the most common Latin translation of the Bible in the Middle Ages, the Vulgate. St. Jerome's Vulgate draws a distinction when Christ says, "Forgive your enemies." The Latin word that Jerome uses is inimicus, which means a personal enemy, not hostis, which means a public enemy.

Prof. Tyerman:

There is an interesting intellectual divide. You have a classical tradition of just war associated with the state. The Christian tradition of course takes much of its impetus from the Old Testament, where you have God commanding the Israelites to commit violence. Saul loses favour of God, because he does not fully exterminate all the Amalekites. He does not commit genocide, that he leaves some of the animals alive. He shouldn't have done that, and some of the people.

Prof. Tyerman:

Joshua is a hero, commits genocide in Canaan. The Book of Maccabees, which although, is often placed in the Apocrypha, was a very popular text in the Middle Ages. There, you have perfect examples of legitimate war fought by religious community for their own religious autonomy and independence. Committing violent act, including mutilating bodies and things like that, with the support of God.

John Dickson:

There's a few Old Testament references to clear up. The account of Saul's life is in the book of One, Samuel in the Old Testament. He was Israel's first king and he ruled in the 11th century BC. God tells Saul to completely destroy the Amalekites, one of Israel's enemies. It's one of the most violent and difficult to read passages in the Bible. Saul doesn't quite kill everything. He lets some of the animals live. Because of that, he loses God's favour. The conquest of the Canaanites by Joshua is another really difficult part of the Old Testament. God ordains a holy war against the Canaanites to turn these pagan lands into Israel's promised land.

John Dickson:

I think there's probably a whole episode to do on Old Testament violence, so watch this space. Anyway, the third warrior tradition Tyerman mentions isn't in the Jewish or Protestant Bible, but it is in the Catholic Old Testament. The books of one and two, Maccabees, tell how an aristocratic Jewish family

named the Hasmoneans, organized a rebellion against the Greco-Syrian ruler, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The architect of the Jewish campaign was a priest named Judas, nicknamed Maccabeus the Hammer. His forces astonishingly beat the pagans and reconsecrated the temple in Jerusalem. The Jewish festival of Hanukkah dedication comes from all of this. We'll have links in the show notes for more on all of these difficult things. The point for now is that the Old Testament does have some violent stories that the crusaders could draw upon.

Prof. Tyerman:

You have these Old Testament texts and what's interesting you find, whereas in the early days, the old text of the Christian Church, the Old Testament texts are reinterpreted. The new covenant takes these texts as metaphors, not literally models to be followed. As time goes on, the association with the state, you look at church fathers, the interpretation of these Old Testament texts becomes, to some extent, more literal. That by the time you get to the 12th century, you have Bernard of Clairvaux, a very influential thinker, taking some Paul's text about putting the breastplate of God on the whack, there were confusions, literally, and when he writes his text in support of the new military order of Templars.

John Dickson:

I should probably jump in here and say something about Bernard of Clairvaux, 1090 to 1153. He really was one of the foremost clerics of the age. He helped establish the famous Knights Templar. He was already famous for his preaching and writing about love and devotion to God. Now, he proclaimed an extraordinary message of violence on behalf of Jesus Christ. The newly established Knights Templar were a large organization of devout Christians during the Medieval Era, who carried out an important security mission, we might say, to protect European travellers visiting sites in the Holy Land that had come under the West's control. They were a wealthy, powerful, and some would say, mysterious order, that has fascinated historians and the public for centuries. Go and look up the DaVinci Code to find one of the modern conspiracy theories about them. Anyway, in preparation for the second crusade, Clairvaux told his Knights Templar.

Speaker 4:

But now, O brave knight, now, O warlike hero, here is a battle you may fight without danger, where it is glory to conquer and gain to die. If you are a prudent merchant, if you are a desirer of this world, behold I show you some great bargains; see that you lose them not. Take the sign of the cross and you shall gain pardon for every sin that you confess with a contrite heart.

John Dickson:

That was Director Mark's, Best Bernard. I'm particularly struck by the way Bernard of Clairvaux took New Testament military metaphors and concretized them. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the first century apostle likens the Christian life to warfare against temptation and persecution. The symbolic nature of the paragraph could hardly be clearer.

Speaker 5:

Therefore, take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day and having done everything to stand firm. Stand therefore and fasten the belt of truth around your waist and put on the breastplate of righteousness, as shoes for your feet, put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith with which you'll be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Ephesians 6:10-17.

John Dickson:

Paul's Armor of God is metaphorical. He even explains each item. The belt is truth. The breastplate is righteousness and so on. A thousand years after Paul, Bernard of Clairvaux alludes to this same New Testament imagery to endorse actual armour and actual weaponry.

Speaker 4:

The knight who puts the breastplate of faith on his soul in the same way as he puts a breastplate of iron on his body is truly intrepid and safe from everything. So forward in safety, knights, and with undaunted souls drive off the enemies of the Cross of Christ, that is Muslims in the Holy Land.

John Dickson:

In this way, Bernard of Clairvaux made an extraordinary interpretive manoeuvre.

Prof. Tyerman:

You have a general intellectual development fuelled by first, the association of the Christian Church with political power, the assumption of the church's role as the official religion of the Roman empire in the fourth century. Then the context, the political context, particularly Western Europe, ruled by a military elite, a military aristocracy, the successes to the Roman Empire, whose social cultural values are those of warriors. These become in a sense, Christianised. You have figures such as Charlemagne, who is regarded as a holy Roman emperor, who fights wars to some extent supported by, to some extent on behalf of Christianity and his contemporary propagandist. Most of whom are clerics, not all, but most are, portray him in that light.

Prof. Tyerman:

There is a cultural process whereby justifying war in defence protection, and to some extent, furtherance of the Christian Church becomes respectable, becomes defence necessary. The reason for that is that religion in the Middle Ages, and we can see it in various parts of the globe today. Religion is bound up intimately with communal identity, social identity. You define yourself as part of a community or what defines that community and what defines that community is shared rituals, shared beliefs, a shared religion. You can see how this process develops. The texts in the New Testament are interpreted, not by everybody, but by authoritative voices conveniently, you may say, but socially, inevitably, in ways that support just war.

John Dickson:

Long before Bernard of Clairvaux's call to his Knights, church leaders were devising a distinctively Christian account of violence that is state violence. One of the most politically consequential intellectual developments in the first millennium of Christianity came from Saint Augustine in the fifth century, who started to theorize about just war in a Christian context. Emperor Constantine had declared his faith in Christ almost a century earlier in the early decades of the 300s. Over the next few generations, Christianity became not just legal and widespread, but intimately connected with the state.

John Dickson:

By the time of Augustine in the early 400s, more and more Christians filled administrative positions in the empire and more and more bishops gained access to the imperial ear. Conversely, more and more governors and emperors went to Christian intellectuals like Augustine for advice on how to do imperial business, including warfare in a Christian way. How does the religion of the cross, of love your enemy, provide advice to the most successful military machine the world had ever seen? Well, the broad principles of Augustine's just war theory can be pieced together from both his giant home, the city of God, and his various letters to Roman officials from around the same time.

John Dickson:

Here's the thing, he utterly rejected the usual Roman justifications for war. Like enlarging the empire, protecting honor, removing hated nations. For much of Roman history, peace, the great Pax Romana, was almost defined as subjugation to Roman order. Augustine, by contrast, argued that military force can be just when its goal is one, to establish mutual peace. Two, when it's waged only in self-defence or to recover stolen property. Three, when soldiers exercise maximum restraint in hostilities. Four, when fighting is conducted with such respect for humanity as to leave the opponent without the sense of being humiliated and resentful. Five, when prisoners of war are preserved, not executed. That's what a just war might look like. That's not exactly what the Crusades look like 600 years later.

Prof. Tyerman:

The Crusade on the other hand is slightly different. Because whereas a war, a just war is seen as a necessary product of a sinful world, public authorities protect through violence. Holy war is different. The Crusades are different from other forms of warfare. Because these are wars fought directly at God's command, not politicians. The leaders of crusades are merely fulfilling God's command. The violence itself is a religious act. To illustrate that, in 1066 the Normans invaded England under a papal banner. They wore relics around their necks, et cetera. Nonetheless, the troops, the Norman troops after Hastings had to do pennants for the slaughter.

Prof. Tyerman:

If they could declare that they fought for the just cause of ridding England, all the systematic and the purge, et cetera, et cetera, then they received a lesser penance for killing, for homicide. 30 years later, for the first crusade, the killing itself, the warfare itself is the penitential act. You don't have to do

penance for fighting on the crusade itself is a religious penitential act. That is a significant conceptual change. This comes about in a particular context. The Crusade is a just war, it's also a holy war.

John Dickson:

The West, of course, wasn't the only society to develop the concept of a holy war. In the east, Islam had a well-established doctrine of jihad in the way of God. That is fighting unbelievers to spread Islam. More on that, after the break.

John Dickson:

Today's Undeception is brought to you by Zondervan's new book, *Bullies and Saints: An Honest Look at the Good and Evil of Christian History*, by John Dickson. It's a little awkward doing an ad for my own book, but I'll have a crack at it. *Bullies and Saints* is certainly the biggest book I've ever written. Others can decide if it's the best. I do think it's one that listeners of this podcast might really enjoy, especially if you're into all that history stuff that we often do here. There are three chapters explicitly on the Crusades, but several more explaining how on earth the followers of the crucified Jesus went from the most persecuted people on earth to proud knight of Christ.

John Dickson:

It explores how even when the church was at its worst, Christian reformers invariably sprang up and called people back to the ways of Christ, whether in the fifth century, the eighth century, the 11th century, all the way through to today. If you feel that Christian history is mostly a story of charity and wisdom, this book might annoy you. On the other hand, if you think Christian history is basically a long nightmare of ignorance and hypocrisy, the evidence I amass here might annoy you too.

John Dickson:

If you're looking for my best attempt to give a century-by-century account of the bullies and saints of the church, I think this might hit the spot. Writing this book has probably crushed any lingering Christian triumphalism I might have once had. It's also given me fresh inspiration for what the original message of Christ can do in a culture, whether in second-century Rome, sixth-century France, 12th-century England, or even 21st-century America, *Bullies and Saints* by Dickson, there's a link in the show notes or head to [zondervan.com](http://zondervan.com).

John Dickson:

In Zambezia Province, Mozambique, Anglican Aid's Waterworks campaign is improving the standard of living for over 5,000 rural villages, including 62-year-old, Louisa. Louisa had five daughters, but she has lost three of them. One was attacked by a crocodile while at the river collecting water, and two others died of cholera, which could have been prevented, had they had access to clean water. The Waterworks campaign has funded boreholes around Louisa's region, making it easy to access clean water for the rest of her family. You can help make this happen in more places. Please, head to [waterworks.org.au](http://waterworks.org.au), [waterworks.org.au](http://waterworks.org.au), to learn more about how the Waterworks campaign works and you can donate there. I urge you to do it today. You can find more in our show notes.

John Dickson:

It's difficult to read the primary sources of the Crusades without being confronted by the strong religious motivations and aims expressed. Like the importance of defending fellow Christians elsewhere in the world, upholding the honor of sacred sites and bringing glory to Jesus Christ over the advancing unbelief of Islam. It's clear the instigator of the Crusades, Pope Urban II, had a spiritual mission in mind when he officially called for the first crusade. Whatever his political ambitions, whether to exert a unifying force over a fractious Europe, or to join together Western and Eastern Christendom. It was a theology that undergirded his thinking.

John Dickson:

It's also worth noting what was happening over in the East. Muslim armies had spread throughout the Middle East, Palestine, Egypt, and North Africa, and it looked like they were heading for Europe. By the 1050s, Islamic forces had captured much of the old Byzantine empire, which was a Christian empire, roughly corresponding to Turkey. Within a few decades, they were knocking at the door of Constantinople, the center of the Eastern Christian Kingdom, which had been continuously ruled by Christian emperors for 700 years. The Byzantine Christian emperor at the time was Alexius I, whose retreating kingdom lay on Islam's western front.

John Dickson:

Alexius sent an appeal to the Pope begging for assistance. Surely Western Christianity wouldn't stand to see the last remaining outpost of Eastern Christianity swept away. Islam, from the beginning, had a highly developed and successful practice of holy war, or jihad. Muslim armies sought to spread the teachings of the prophet Mohamed. A bit like ancient Rome, actually, they saw the establishment of Islamic rule and religion as a kind of peace for the whole world. In a very real sense, the Crusades were a belated defensive war, much of the Christian world, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and North Africa, had been conquered by Islam in the centuries before.

John Dickson:

Now, Islam was on Europe's doorstep. In this sense, and perhaps only in this sense, the crusades first developed as a hyper-religious version of just war, but there were also political dimensions. Can we talk about the immediate trigger of the first crusade? In particular, what were Pope Urban's main motivations, so far as we can tell in calling for the crusade?

Prof. Tyerman:

Well, as you say, as far as we can tell, is a significant detail. We have very little of Urban's own thoughts to excavate. We have a few of his letters, some of which have clearly been tampered with over time. One doesn't quite know the proximity to his own thought processes. However, there are other contextual pieces of evidence that we can perhaps have a guess. Urban II was faced with a very tricky position in Western Europe. There was a rival pope supported by the German emperor who was claiming the legitimacy, vis á vis, Urban.

Prof. Tyerman:

Urban was part of a particular faction in the Catholic church, promoting papal supremacy. The first crusaders, they're not part of this. One of the phrases that the papal reformers of the 11th century used, one of their propaganda phrases was, *libertas ecclesiae*, freedom of the church. In Urban's letters about the first crusade, he uses that phrase to talk about not merely *libertas ecclesiae* of the Western church, but also helping the Eastern church to free itself from conquest by the soldier of Turks. There is a political diplomatic context of helping Byzantium, which has the benefit to prove in the West that Urban II is the true Pope, is the alvitre of religious policy in the West, not his rival. There is a sense of twin track of element to that.

John Dickson:

After a four-month preaching tour throughout France promoting his plan, Pope Urban officially called for the first crusade in a sermon delivered outside the cathedral in Clermont, in Central France on the 27th of November 1095. The central theme was clear. With full papal blessing, this war wasn't sinful, but redemptive. Any Pilgrim, which is what they call themselves, who was willing to go to the East, fight the Muslims and reclaim Jerusalem for the Lord, would receive pardon for sins and the promise of salvation.

John Dickson:

Whoever for devotion alone, not to gain honor or money goes to Jerusalem to liberate the church of God, he declared, can substitute this journey for all penance. Urban writes of how he imposed on the crusaders the obligation to undertake such a military enterprise for the remission of all their sins. Salvation is apparently found in fighting the infidel. Some reports suggest the crowd that first heard Urban's sermon at Clermont responded in unison, perhaps led by the Pope's assistants, "God wills it."

Speaker 6:

An army of Jesus Christ, which bears his holy cross, cannot be beaten.

John Dickson:

That's from the Ridley Scott crusader epic, Kingdom of Heaven.

Speaker 7:

Does the count of Tiberius suggest that it could be?

Speaker 6:

There must be war. God wills it.

John Dickson:

Can we say anything about the motivations of the crusaders themselves? I mean, yes, if it's hard even to read Urban, it must be incredibly hard to read the mind of a soldier. Can we tell if they were motivated by going and helping our brother Greeks and win back to Jerusalem? Were they taking revenge on

Muslims, or was it also, they actually saw that this was a way of salvation? They actually felt, "Wow, I might be saved through this endeavour."

Prof. Tyerman:

Well, as you say, it's very difficult to tell. Because even where you have personal documents, I'd say crusaders raising money from the church, we have charts recording the reasons they're doing that. The reason why they're going to the crusade, and they talk in terms of remission of sins, salvation. These charts are written by the clerics themselves, the beneficiaries of the grants. I think the answer to your question is, and all the things that you mentioned, were part of the motives, the riches. The word *divitias* is used in a description of a campaign war cry at a battle in early of 1097, the spring of 1097 in Asia minor, saying that we stand fast and defend ourselves. We have the God, this day will give us *divitias*. The standard English translation, it translates that as booty, but it actually means riches.

Prof. Tyerman:

I think the key is that people go on crusade in search of riches and they are spiritual riches. They're spiritual rewards. They can also be material rewards, but two are not contradictory. If you do something that is good, God will reward you, either in this life, and or the next life. The Crusade decree promulgated in the second at the Council of Clermont in 1095, talks about going for devotion alone, not for honor and glory.

Prof. Tyerman:

It doesn't say you can't get honor and glory, but your motive has to be correct. That's the key thing. Yes, I think it's very clear from all the sources that you're promised penance, it's essentially, salvation, if you follow God's command. Within that, there is obviously, adventure. There's tourism, there's escape from your particular condition. There is a desire to enhance reputation, which becomes very important. A lot of crusaders don't have a choice. If you're a household knight of a lord who goes on a crusade, you've got to follow him. Otherwise, you're unemployed. The entourage of the great leaders don't necessarily have any choice.

Prof. Tyerman:

There are some who go as a young man on the make, who sees this an opportunity to enhance their social prestige. In the past, a lot of his historiography has argued about, are they motivated by greed? Are they motivated by parties? It seems to be that this is a false dichotomy, that if you ask anybody who joins an army, why do they join the army? They will probably give you some idealistic motive. If you then ask them, "Well, would you do it for no pay?" You might get another different answer. That doesn't make them hypocrites. I think the point about the Crusades is that as anything else, it's an obvious thing to say, but often historiography ignores this. It's an extremely human activity and therefore, contradictory, confusing, confused, and mixed, in terms of motive.

John Dickson:

The soldier's motives might be mixed, but the religious nature of the first crusade is clear. It's underlined by the key piece of theatre performed by all crusading soldiers who took the vow to win back Jerusalem. They each received a piece of cloth in the shape of a cross, and they sewed it into their garments as a sign that they were obeying the words of Christ himself, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel, will save it." That's Mark 8:34-35.

John Dickson:

Any modern reader of the passage is going to protest that there's no way Jesus meant this to be a justification of fighting. It was all about bearing persecution for his cause, all the way to death. It plainly doesn't mean, "Let's go and do holy war." In France, in the 11th century, the key public interpretation of this passage, and it was a favourite passage, was that able-bodied Christian men should bear the cross of fighting against the enemies of Christ. The very word crusade comes from the Latin crux or cross, referring to this ceremony of taking up the sacred emblem.

John Dickson:

It took the first crusaders three years to get to Jerusalem. Of the approximately 100,000 men, and some women, we think, who set off, historians estimate that one in 20 crusaders didn't make it to Jerusalem. Some died in battles along the way, others simply gave up and went home. It took a month-long siege to actually capture Jerusalem. To the surprise of almost all involved, the first crusaders were victorious, but that's certainly not the end of the story. There were at least four other crusades that were not as successful. In fact, they were mostly a dismal failure.

John Dickson:

This is the first of a special two-part episode on the Crusades. We've got a bunch of stuff over at [undeceptions.com](http://undeceptions.com) related to this episode, including links to my new Bullies and Saints, which has chapters on this topic. We've also got links to the amazing work of Christopher Tyerman. Next episode, we'll be looking at why in the world people felt they needed a second, third, fourth, and fifth crusade. It's not pretty. We'll explain why the crusades suddenly stopped. It was because we all became secular and humanitarian, right? No. See you.

John Dickson:

Undeceptions is hosted by me, John Dickson, produced by Kaley Payne, and directed by Mark Hadley, editing by Nathaniel Shumack. Special thanks to our series sponsors, Zondervan, for making this Undeception possible. Undeceptions is part of the Eternity Podcast Network, an audio collection showcasing the seriously good news of faith today.

Speaker 8:

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