

Palisades Community Bible Church
Online Sunday School

Friday the 13th

November 15, 2020

Bad luck! What is it about Friday the 13th that makes us extra cautious about bad things happening to us? Why are we more sensitive to 'unexplainable' things on that day each year? Why the superstitions? Indeed, do we have so many ridiculous horror movies on the theme?

Better yet; Why do we need to learn about it in Sunday School? Let's look into the history of this venerated date and find out why the Templar Knights and a French king with bad credit made such an impact on our history.

First, let's set the context. The "Crusades" were Military campaigns sanctioned by the Latin Church in the Middle Ages (between 1096 and 1271). They were a series of religious wars initiated, supported, and sometimes directed by the Latin Church for the purpose of recovering the Holy Land from Islamic rule. The battles were violent and bloody, but the end resulted in open trade routes and the launch of the Renaissance.

The Order of the Knights Templar traced their lineage back to the First Crusade. The history and fascination about who they were and their military prowess, wealth and ultimate demise has been a never-ending source legend in both books and film (which means that much of what our culture has come to know about them is from entertainment sources, not history books).

After the initial Crusade to take the city of Jerusalem back from the Muslims in 1099, many religious pilgrims from Europe began to visit the Holy Land and the religious sites set down in the Bible. But to get thru to Jerusalem, these Europeans had to cross through Muslim held lands - many of them were robbed and murdered.

A French knight, Hugues de Payens created an order that consisted of himself and eight other knights which became known as the Pauperes commilitones Christi

Templique Solomonici – “The Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon.” The name was eventually shortened to the “Knights Templar.” These knights were related to Payens either by blood or marriage and their mission was to protect the pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land.

The Templar Knights approached King Baldwin II in Jerusalem who allowed them to set up their headquarters in Temple Mount. The Dome of the Rock became a Christian Church and the al Aqsa Mosque located atop of what was believed to be Solomon’s Temple, is where the Templars were located.

Early in their existence, the Templars were criticized, especially about the practice of their carrying of swords, which was taboo at the time for religious men. Their critics failed to notice that the Muslim looters were heavily armed and refused to lay down their swords simply because they were asked to. But thanks to influential Bernard of Clairvaux who wrote an essay on the Order, the men of the Templar became the first warrior monks of the western world. He wrote: “[A Templar Knight] is truly a fearless knight, and secure on every side, for his soul is protected by the armor of faith, just as his body is protected by the armor of steel. He is thus doubly-armed, and need fear neither demons nor men.”

Luke 22: 36 Then said he (Jesus) unto them, “But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.”

The order received a formal endorsement by the Catholic Church in 1129 and in 1139, their status was bolstered even further when Pope Innocent II issued a Papal Bull (public decree) that allowed the Knights Templar special rights. Among them, the Templars were exempt from paying taxes, permitted to build their own oratories, and answered to no one save the Pope himself.

Members of the Templars swore an oath of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Templars didn’t drink, gamble or swear. They were devout Christians who spent much of their time in prayer. They adopted a simple white tunic that was adorned by a red cross which became their signature hallmark. (The guards at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier model their lives after the values of the Templar Knights.)

Their influence quickly grew as they set up banks, built fleets of ships and controlled the island of Cypress. Their banking system was ingenious as pilgrims

could deposit funds in their home countries and withdraw funds in the Holy Land, rather than exposing their funds to theft while traveling.

The Templars built castles across the Holy Land and quickly gained the reputation as fierce fighters, defeating many Muslim armies during the next several decades.

Gradually the Templars and the Christians lost their footholds in the Holy Land. Saladin the Muslim leader from Tikrit inside modern-day Iraq, had battled with the Templars and lost in 1177. He fought them again in 1187, and this time defeated them at the disaster at the Battle of the Horns of Hattin. The Templars under the command of Grand Master Gerard de Ridefort had marched out away from water to meet the army of Saladin. Overcome by heat after just a day, they were slaughtered. Jerusalem fell a few months later.

After the fall of Acre (a port city north of Mt. Carmel in northwestern Israel) in 1291, the Templars lost their last stronghold in the Holy Land. This would ultimately lead to their demise. In 1303, the Templars had set up their headquarters in Paris. They were an order who had lost their purpose but still controlled enormous wealth. This unstable environment set up a power play by King Philip IV.

Philip's kingdom was deeply in debt to the Templars and he feared their power. After the Templar banks denied Philip another loan he moved against them. On the morning of **Friday, October 13, 1307**, Philip had scores of the Templars arrested in France including **the order's Grand Master Jacques de Molay**. Many were sent to the Tower of Chinon where they were brutally tortured until they confessed to false charges, which included heresy, homosexuality, financial corruption, devil worshipping, fraud, spitting on the cross and more.

Despite the absence of any evidence other than what was coerced by torture by King Philip, the Pope, Clement V, issued an edict dissolving the order of the Templar Knights in 1312. Under enormous pressure by King Philip. Jacques de Molay was burned at the stake in 1314.

King Philip never believed any of the charges were true. He moved against them mainly out of jealousy and greed. He was deeply indebted to the Templars and although their money was supposed to have been given to a rival order; the

Knights Hospitallers, it is believed that Philip and King Edward II of England made off with most of the money.

OK, that's a LOT of history packed into a short space. I hope that, as you read these events, some synapses are occurring. By that, I mean that throughout our lives, we learn things that may not have a context or a connection until something else comes along and ties them together. As I was organizing these facts on the page, I was struck by some Biblical truths and lessons, such as;

- The timing of Jesus' birth. **Luke 2: 1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. 2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.** Can you imagine what a field day the roadside bandits would have had when thousands of people were traveling to the same city to pay taxes? This gives me understanding of why the Templar Knights sought to protect the travel routes of pilgrims to the holy sites in Israel. By the way, the oppressive and violent Roman soldiers were KEY to safe travel in their region – same as the Templars.
- The ruthlessness of the tyrant. The King may bless you one day, and fund your work, only to behead you the next, if your usefulness has expired. **Isaiah 10:1 Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression, 2 to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey!**
- Israel has always been, and shall always be, the battlefield of the civilizations of earth. **Revelation 16: 12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. 13 And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. 14 For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the**

whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. 15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”) 16 And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. The Hebrew name is “Har-Megiddon” which is widely understood to be the region surrounding Tel Megiddo is the site of the ancient city of Megiddo, the remains of which form a tell (archaeological mound), situated in northern Israel near Kibbutz Megiddo, about 30 km south-east of Haifa.

Conclusion: Friday the 13th is not a day of superstition. It’s not a day of bad luck. It’s a day that an irresponsible king destroyed his police department and funneled the funds in a way that benefitted him directly. The horror is that history repeats itself.

Father in heaven. Help us discern lies from truth.

Help us to be good....not just nice.

Help us to never take our eyes off your Son.

Amen