

Dr. Kevin E. Frederick, Waldensians, Session 9, The Plague and the Huguenots (1630-1650) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Frederick, Waldensians, Session 9, The Plague and the Huguenots, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Kevin Frederick explores the history of the Waldensians, a Christian group that faced centuries of oppression. It highlights their early commitment to spreading the Bible and their persecution by the Roman Catholic Church, French kings, and the Duke of Savoy. The lecture then examines the connections between the Waldensians and the Huguenots, French Calvinists who also endured significant persecution. It notes theological parallels, the impact of the plague on the Waldensians leading to reliance on Huguenot pastors and the adoption of French in worship, and the significance of the Huguenot Cross as a symbol. The narrative concludes with the resilience of both groups despite intense adversity and their enduring faith.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Frederick, Waldensians, Session 9 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Church History → Waldensians).



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ans_Session09.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Frederick, Waldensians, Session 9, The Plague and the Huguenots

Briefing Document: Waldensians, the Plague, and the Huguenots

Overview:

This document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented in Dr. Kevin E. Frederick's Lecture 9 on the Waldensians, focusing on the period influenced by the Spirit (referring to their foundational faith), the devastating impact of the plague, and the significant relationship with the Huguenots. The lecture emphasizes the enduring faith and resilience of the Waldensian community through centuries of persecution, highlighting their core beliefs and their eventual connection and shared struggles with the French Huguenots.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Enduring Faith and Persecution:

- The lecture begins with a sermon based on 2 Peter 1:16-21, emphasizing the eyewitness account of Christ's majesty and the divine origin of prophetic messages. This scriptural foundation is linked to the Waldensians' commitment to the word of God.
- The Waldensian community endured nearly 700 years of "political, religious, and economic oppression, along with numerous campaigns of destruction, torture, and death." From the 13th to the 19th century, there were 33 separate persecutions by the Roman Catholic Church, the French King, and the Duke of Savoy, often acting in concert to "completely destroy or try to the existence of the Waldensian communities."
- Their survival is presented as a "witness to the power of faith" and a testament to their "fierce dedication... to the word of God and the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout Central Europe long before the Reformation was ever conceived."
- The edict of emancipation in 1848 by Duke Carlos Alberto granted them freedom of religion after centuries of oppression.

2. Connection with the Huguenots and the Huguenot Cross:

- The lecture explores the connection between the Waldensians and the Huguenots, noting that the Huguenot Cross is the adopted symbol of the Waldensian people. While a direct explanation is lacking, the lecture weaves together historical connections to provide answers.
- Both groups shared a focus on proclaiming the word of God. Just as Peter defended his teaching against accusations of false prophecy by pointing to the transfiguration, the Waldensians were persecuted for "knowing and proclaiming the word of God" without the Roman Catholic Church's sanction.
- The Waldensians emphasized Christ as the "sole head of the Church" and, like Peter, focused on the "proclamation of the word of God," mirroring the practices of the Waldensian Barba. This is connected to their motto, "Lux Lucet in Tenebris" (the light shines in the darkness), echoing Peter's metaphor of a lamp in a dark place.

3. Early Waldensian Practices and Growth:

- The initial persecution by the Roman Catholic Church was primarily due to the Waldensians "memorizing whole sections of the gospel and preaching the word of God on the streets without any official sanctioning by the church." They also traveled in "teams of two, proclaiming the gospel to people all around Europe."
- This early missionary activity led to significant growth, with "more than 800,000 Christians who called themselves Waldensians in Europe" within a century, spreading from south-central France to Germany and parts of central Europe.

4. Parallels and Differences between Waldensians and Huguenots:

- The theological beliefs of both traditions had "numerous parallels," with many Reformation-era theological points and practices found in the pre-existing Waldensian movement, including:
 - "the authority of scripture"
 - "two sacraments"
 - "the lordship of Jesus Christ as head of the church"
 - "the simplicity of living"

- "devotion derived from the relationships between the disciples of Jesus and his teachings."
- Both groups valued their pastors and used a French Bible authorized by the Waldensians and written by Robert Olivetan. They also emphasized "the priesthood of all believers" and the importance of literacy for studying the Bible.
- Key differences included the social composition (Huguenots attracting nobility and the middle class, while Waldensians were primarily subsistence agriculturalists in an "economic ghetto") and church governance (Waldensians had a Presbyterian-style connectional government with annual synods, while Huguenot churches were more congregationally based with synods every three years).

5. The Impact of the Plague:

- During the reign of King Louis XII of France, French troops occupied Waldensian valleys, leading to the spread of the bubonic plague in the 1630s.
- The plague "devastated more than half the Waldensian population in the valleys, including fourteen of the sixteen Waldensian ministers."
- This loss of pastors necessitated seeking new ministers from Geneva and the French Huguenots. These new ministers were French-speaking, leading to the adoption of French as the language of worship from 1630 onwards, a tradition that persisted for centuries. Stevens notes that even today, hymns are sung in French in some valleys, while sermons are in Italian.

6. The Huguenot Cross as a Symbol:

- The Waldensians rejected Roman Catholic symbolism in their church buildings.
- The "Huguenot cross was embraced as the only legitimate symbol of the resurrection by Waldensians from the time after the plague under the leadership of the Huguenot pastors."
- For centuries, it was the only permitted jewelry for Waldensian women besides a wedding band, signifying its importance.

7. Renewed Persecution and Resilience:

- Under King Louis XIV, the Huguenots faced severe persecution with the revocation of religious tolerance in 1685, leading to widespread destruction, death, and exile.

- Two years later, the persecution extended to the Waldensian Valleys, resulting in deaths, destruction, and the exile of approximately 3,000 Waldensians to Geneva under Henri Arnault.
- In Geneva, Waldensian men joined with Huguenots for the "Glorious Return" in 1689, demonstrating their continued tenacity. The descendants of these returning settlers form the Waldensian community today.

8. Lasting Legacy and Connection:

- The lecture concludes by reiterating the shared faith and witness of the Waldensians and Huguenots, who understood the "word of God, along with our witness to that word, is the light shining in the dark places of this world."
- Their enduring faith in the face of persecution is celebrated.
- The quote from Martin Luther, "we were all Waldensians without knowing it," highlights the perceived foundational influence of the Waldensian movement.
- The emancipation in 1848 led to the Waldensians beginning to evangelize in Italian, reflecting a shift towards engaging with the wider population in their local language.

This lecture provides a valuable historical overview of the Waldensians, emphasizing their deep roots in biblical faith, their remarkable perseverance through centuries of intense persecution, and their significant interconnectedness with the Huguenot movement, particularly after the devastating impact of the plague in the 17th century. The adoption of the Huguenot Cross serves as a tangible symbol of this shared history and theological affinity.

4. Study Guide: Frederick, Waldensians, Session 9, The Plague and the Huguenots

Waldensians, the Plague, and the Huguenots: A Study Guide

Key Concepts and Themes

- **Waldensian Origins and Beliefs:** Understand the core tenets of the Waldensian faith from its 12th-century beginnings, including their emphasis on scripture, preaching, and the lordship of Christ.
- **Persecution of the Waldensians:** Detail the reasons for and the nature of the prolonged persecution they faced from the Roman Catholic Church, French monarchs, and the Duke of Savoy.
- **The Protestant Reformation and the Huguenots:** Explain the emergence of the Huguenots as French Calvinists during the Reformation and their theological similarities with the Waldensians.
- **Connections and Parallels:** Analyze the significant parallels in theology, practices (like Bible translation and emphasis on literacy), and shared experiences of persecution between the Waldensians and Huguenots.
- **Differences:** Identify key distinctions between the two groups, such as their socio-economic backgrounds and church governance structures.
- **The Impact of the Plague:** Understand how the bubonic plague in the 17th century significantly impacted the Waldensian ministry and led to closer ties with the Huguenots.
- **The Huguenot Cross:** Explain the adoption of the Huguenot Cross as a significant symbol within the Waldensian community, particularly after the plague.
- **Periods of Tolerance and Renewed Persecution:** Describe the fluctuating periods of tolerance and intense persecution experienced by both groups, including events like the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.
- **The Glorious Return:** Understand the significance of the Glorious Return in the late 17th century as a testament to the resilience of the Waldensians.

- **Emancipation and Modern Waldensians:** Explain the Edict of Emancipation in 1848 and its impact on the Waldensian community, including their move towards evangelization and language adaptation in worship.

Quiz

1. What was the primary reason for the initial persecution of the Waldensians by the Roman Catholic Church in their early decades?
2. Describe two key theological beliefs or practices that were shared by both the Waldensians and the Huguenots.
3. What significant event in the 17th century led to a substantial loss of Waldensian pastors and an increased reliance on Huguenot support?
4. Explain one key difference in the socio-economic makeup of the Waldensian and Huguenot communities.
5. What was the significance of the Edict of Emancipation granted in 1848 for the Waldensian community?
6. How did the Waldensians view and treat religious symbolism used by the Roman Catholic Church in their own worship practices?
7. What is the historical significance of the "Glorious Return" for the Waldensian people?
8. How did the Waldensian emphasis on scripture and individual study influence their practices, such as literacy?
9. What role did the French Bible translated by Robert Olivetan play for both the Waldensians and the Huguenots?
10. What statement did Martin Luther make regarding the Waldensians during the Reformation period?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The primary reason for the initial persecution of the Waldensians was their practice of memorizing and preaching the gospel on the streets in teams of two without official sanctioning from the Roman Catholic Church.
2. Two key theological beliefs shared by both groups were the authority of scripture as the ultimate guide and the lordship of Jesus Christ as the sole head of the church. Both also emphasized the priesthood of all believers.

3. The bubonic plague in the 1630s devastated the Waldensian population, including the deaths of most of their seminary-trained pastors, leading them to seek new ministers from Geneva and the Huguenots.
4. A key difference was that the Huguenots attracted many noblemen and members of the middle class in France, while the Waldensians primarily came from a subsistence agricultural background in the Cottian Alps.
5. The Edict of Emancipation in 1848 granted the Waldensians freedom of religion after nearly 700 years of oppression, allowing them to practice their faith openly and begin evangelizing outside their traditional valleys.
6. The Waldensians outwardly rejected religious symbolism used by the Roman Catholic Church in worship, viewing it as an ostentatious display and a distraction from the message of the gospel.
7. The "Glorious Return" of 1689 represents a remarkable act of resilience where exiled Waldensians, with Huguenot support, returned to their valleys after persecution, ensuring the survival of their community.
8. The Waldensian emphasis on scripture led them to teach their children to read and write so that individuals could study the Bible for themselves, highlighting the importance of personal engagement with the text.
9. The French Bible translated by Robert Olivetan, authorized by the Waldensians, was used by both the Waldensian and Huguenot communities, serving as a crucial text for their worship and study.
10. Martin Luther stated that during the Reformation, "we were all Waldensians without knowing it," acknowledging the theological parallels between the early reformers and the pre-Reformation Waldensians.

Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze the key factors that contributed to the centuries-long persecution of the Waldensian community. How did their theological beliefs and practices challenge the established religious and political order?
2. Compare and contrast the similarities and differences between the Waldensian and Huguenot movements. In what ways did their shared theological heritage and experiences of persecution lead to solidarity and mutual influence?

3. Discuss the impact of the bubonic plague in the 17th century on the Waldensian community. How did this event shape their relationship with the Huguenots and influence their worship practices?
4. Evaluate the significance of the Huguenot Cross as a symbol within the Waldensian tradition. How did its adoption reflect the historical connections and shared identity of the two groups?
5. Examine the long-term impact of the Edict of Emancipation of 1848 on the Waldensian community. How did it mark a turning point in their history and shape their engagement with the wider world?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Waldensians:** A Christian movement originating in the 12th century, emphasizing biblical authority, preaching, and a simple lifestyle.
- **Huguenots:** French Calvinists who emerged during the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century.
- **Reformation:** A 16th-century movement for religious reform that resulted in the establishment of Protestant churches.
- **Edict of Emancipation (1848):** The decree issued by Duke of Savoy, Carlos Alberto, granting religious freedom to the Waldensian community in the Cottian Alps.
- **Cottian Alps:** A mountain range in the western Alps, straddling the border between France and Italy, where the Waldensian community historically resided.
- **Barba:** The term used to refer to Waldensian pastors or preachers, who often traveled in pairs.
- **Lux Lucet in Tenebris:** A Latin phrase meaning "The light shines in the darkness," a traditional motto associated with the Waldensians.
- **Huguenot Cross:** A distinctive cross symbol adopted by the Huguenots and later by the Waldensians, representing their faith and resilience.
- **Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre (1572):** A targeted series of assassinations and mob violence against Huguenots in Paris, spreading to other parts of France.

- **Edict of Nantes (1598):** A decree issued by King Henry IV of France granting substantial rights to Calvinist Protestants (Huguenots) in a largely Catholic nation. Revoked in 1685.
- **Glorious Return (1689):** The return of exiled Waldensians from Geneva to their valleys in the Cottian Alps, led by Henri Arnault, to reclaim their homeland.
- **Synod:** An assembly of clergy and lay representatives to discuss and decide on matters of doctrine, administration, and discipline in a church or group of churches.
- **Presbyterian Governance:** A form of church governance characterized by representative bodies of elders who oversee the church at various levels.
- **Congregational Governance:** A form of church governance where each local church is autonomous and makes its own decisions.
- **Bubonic Plague:** A highly contagious and deadly disease transmitted by fleas carrying the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*.
- **Heresy:** Beliefs or opinions contrary to orthodox religious doctrine.
- **Transfiguration:** A biblical event in which Jesus Christ's appearance was miraculously changed and glorified on a mountain, witnessed by Peter, James, and John.

5. FAQs on Frederick, Waldensians, Session 9, The Plague and the Huguenots, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: Waldensians and Their Connections

1. What were the primary reasons for the early persecution of the Waldensians? The Roman Catholic Church primarily persecuted the Waldensians because they were memorizing and preaching the Gospel on the streets without official church sanction. Their practice of traveling in pairs to spread the word of God throughout Europe and their rejection of the exclusive authority of the Roman Church also contributed significantly to this persecution.

2. How did the Protestant Reformation and figures like John Calvin impact the Waldensians? The theological beliefs of the Waldensians, which predated the Reformation, shared significant parallels with the emerging Reformed movement led by figures like John Calvin. This similarity led many Waldensians in France, who had gone underground due to earlier persecutions, to identify with and become known as Huguenots. Waldensian pastors also played a role in the translation of the Bible into French, a version later used by the Huguenots.

3. What were the key similarities in the beliefs and practices of the Waldensians and the Huguenots? Both the Waldensians and the Huguenots emphasized the authority of scripture, recognized only two sacraments, believed in the lordship of Jesus Christ as the head of the church, valued simplicity in living, and stressed the importance of personal devotion derived from the teachings of Jesus. Both groups also emphasized the role of pastors and encouraged literacy among their members so they could study the Bible themselves.

4. What were the main differences between the Waldensians and the Huguenots? While sharing theological similarities, the Huguenots drew significant support from noblemen and the middle class in France, leading to greater economic influence compared to the Waldensians, who primarily came from the subsistence agricultural society of the Cottian Alps. In terms of church governance, the Waldensians had a Presbyterian-style connectional system with annual synods, whereas the Huguenot churches were more congregationally based with greater local autonomy.

5. How did the bubonic plague in the 17th century affect the Waldensian community and its relationship with the Huguenots?

The bubonic plague, brought to the Waldensian Valleys by French troops in the 1630s, devastated the population, including a large majority of their trained ministers. This crisis led the Waldensians to seek assistance from Geneva and the French Huguenots for new ministers. As a result, Huguenot pastors were sent to guide them, and French became the language of worship in the Waldensian valleys, a tradition that persisted for centuries.

6. Why did the Waldensians adopt the Huguenot Cross as a significant symbol? Having rejected traditional Catholic symbolism in their church buildings, the Waldensians embraced the Huguenot Cross after the plague, under the leadership of Huguenot pastors. It became their primary symbol of the resurrection and was even the only form of jewelry, besides a wedding band, traditionally worn by Waldensian women for hundreds of years.

7. What were the major periods of persecution faced by the Waldensians and the Huguenots in the 17th century?

Both groups faced intense persecution in the 17th century. For the Huguenots, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 under Louis XIV led to widespread extermination, destruction of churches, and exile. Shortly after, in 1687, the Waldensian Valleys were targeted by the same king, resulting in deaths, destruction, and the exile of many Waldensians to Geneva.

8. What is the significance of the "Glorious Return" and what does it reveal about the resilience of the Waldensians and Huguenots?

The "Glorious Return" of 1689 refers to the counter-assault led by Henri Arnault, where exiled Waldensians, many joining with Huguenots in Geneva, returned to the Cottian Alps. This event highlights the remarkable tenacity and resilience of both communities in the face of severe persecution. Their determination to maintain their faith and return to their homeland underscores their deep commitment to their beliefs, passed down to their descendants.