



**VIEW NORTHWEST:** THE BATTLEFIELD WHERE SALADIN DEFEATED THE CRUSADERS IN 1187 AD. THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN FROM THE SOUTHWEST SIDE OF THE HORNS OF HATTIN, LOOKING DOWN ON THE BATTLEFIELD (SEE BELOW).

**BELOW (VIEW EAST):** THE HORNS OF HATTIN (CENTER) WITH MT. NITAI (TOP LEFT), MT. ARBEL (TOP CENTER), AND THE SEA OF GALILEE (TOP RIGHT). THE BATTLE BETWEEN SALADIN AND THE CRUSADERS TOOK PLACE IN THE FIELD (BOTTOM).





**VIEW WEST:** THE HORNS OF HATTIN (TOP CENTER) FROM ABOVE TABGHA (SEE "TABGHA" ON PAGE 223). MT. ARBEL (TOP LEFT), MT. NITAI (UPPER RIGHT), THE PLAIN OF GENNESARET (CENTER), AND THE SEA OF GALILEE ARE ALSO VISIBLE.

## HORNS OF HATTIN

(SEE MAP ON PAGE 176)

The Horns of Hattin is an extinct volcano with twin peaks overlooking the plain of Hattin to the west and the Arbel Valley to the east. The Muslim hero Saladin was the founder of the Ayyubid dynasty and the sultan of Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Palestine. He was born in 1137/38 in Tikrit, Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), and died March 4, 1193, in Damascus.

He is remembered for capturing Jerusalem after nine decades of occupation by the Franks, a powerful Christian kingdom that occupied northern France, Belgium, and western Germany. He also earned a reputation as a generous but firm ruler:

Saladin's every act was inspired by an intense and unwavering devotion to the idea of jihad, or holy war.<sup>1</sup> It was an essential part of his policy to encourage the growth and spread of Muslim religious institutions. He courted their scholars and preachers, founded colleges and mosques for their use, and commissioned them to write edifying works, especially on the jihad itself. Through moral regeneration, which was a genuine part of his own way of life, he tried to re-create in his own realm some of the same zeal and enthusiasm that had proved so valuable to the first generations of Muslims when, five centuries before, they had conquered half the known world.<sup>2</sup>

Three months before Saladin captured Jerusalem, he defeated the Crusaders in a decisive battle at the Horns of Hattin (see the photos on page 194). The date was July 4, 1187 AD, 589 years to the day before the American colonies declared their independence from Great Britain.



**VIEW WEST:** MT. NITAI LOOKING TOWARD THE HORNS OF HATTIN (TOP LEFT) AND THE MOUNTAINS OF LOWER GALILEE. MT. NITAI SLOPES SOUTH AND WEST TOWARD WADI HAMAM.

On July 3, the Crusader army made their way to Tiberias. In need of water, they changed direction for the Springs of Kafr Hattin, where they camped instead of pressing on to Tiberias. The delay gave Saladin time to surround the Crusaders and cut them off from their water supply. On July 4, he set fire to the fields around the “infidels”; thus, he trapped and nearly destroyed their entire army in one blow. The Crusaders lost so many men in the battle that Saladin’s forces were able to overrun most of their strongholds in the rest of the country. The final blow came on October 2, 1187, when Saladin captured Jerusalem. Instead of killing all the Christians in the city, he let them purchase their freedom provided they did not harm the Muslim inhabitants. The Muslim victory sparked a third crusade, which began two years later.

## WAR AND AGENCY

Islamic history in Jerusalem began when the prophet Muhammad’s successor, Caliph Umar, conquered the city in 635 AD. The First Crusade to recapture Jerusalem was launched on November 27, 1095, almost five hundred years later. The religious wars between Muslims and Christians over the Holy Land lasted nearly two hundred years, from 1095 to 1291 AD. The wars were attempts to control holy sites considered sacred by both groups. War happens when a place, rather than what made the place holy to begin with, becomes the objective.

Jerusalem (al-Quds in Arabic or Holy City) is sacred to Muslims because of its connection to the prophet Muhammad, who traveled from Mecca to Jerusalem, where he ascended to heaven to speak with God. Jerusalem is holy to Christians because of its association with Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on behalf of humankind. Regardless of where you stand on the issue of Jerusalem’s holiness, it’s not the place but what happened there that should hold our attention. As Christians, we are taught to love our enemies and to pray for them which despitefully use us (Matt. 5:44). According to Mohammad, Muslims have an individual duty to “continuously to take care of the neighbor till . . . Allah is to make him an inheritor.”<sup>3</sup>



**VIEW SOUTH:** THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN FROM THE FIELD WHERE SALADIN DEFEATED THE CRUSADER FORCES IN 1187 AD. YOU CAN ALSO SEE THE ROUNDED SHAPE OF MT. TABOR (CENTER; SEE "MT. TABOR" IN BLESSED PILGRIMAGE, VOL. 2).

## LIFE'S PURPOSE

Death is an experience no one escapes. It comes to us all. Likewise, no one can avoid birth: "God himself that formed the earth . . . hath established it, he created it not in vain, *he formed it to be inhabited*" (Isa. 45:18, emphasis added). With all its ups and downs, moments of joy and moments of sorrow, our time on earth has a purpose. We are here to conquer, but only ourselves.

Elder Gong taught, "In a miraculous way, the purpose of Creation and the nature of God are to know beginning and end, to bring about all that is for our good, and to help us become sanctified and holy through Jesus Christ's grace and Atonement."<sup>4</sup>

Throughout history, men have used conquest to further themselves and their ambition for power, gain, and temporal glory. But God has a different plan for His children. We were born to learn by experience the difference between good and evil. God gave us agency to choose good because that is the path that leads back to Him who is Good. There is, however, more to the plan. It turns out that *choosing* good is the key to becoming good through Christ's Atonement. The opposites of good and evil, light and darkness, health and sickness, enable choice and give it meaning.

## CHOOSING GOOD

God wants us to be eternally happy, as He is. Experiencing godly joy is impossible unless we *are* good. Because we are human, we don't always choose the right. To overcome this obstacle, God gave us two precious gifts that enable us to fulfill our purpose despite our weakness—gifts that make it possible to experience mortality without being condemned by the experience. The gifts are *repentance* and the *Atonement of Jesus Christ*. Repentance is our part. It is the condition we meet to bring about change. Jesus Christ's part was to make an Atonement, enabling mercy to satisfy the demands of justice. Through the enabling power of grace, God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We cannot save ourselves. We cannot perfect ourselves. We



**VIEW NORTHEAST:** THE NORTHERN PEAK OF HATTIN, VIEWED FROM THE SOUTHERN PEAK. FOR PERSPECTIVE, YOU CAN ALSO SEE SAFED (TOP RIGHT; SEE "SAFED (ZEFAT)" ON PAGE 77).

**BELOW (VIEW WEST):** WADI HAMAM BELOW THE WESTERN ENDS OF MT. ARBEL (BOTTOM LEFT) AND MT. NITAI (BOTTOM RIGHT). THE HORNS OF HATTIN APPEAR IN THE DISTANCE (TOP LEFT) WITH THE ARBEL VALLEY BELOW THEM (CENTER).



become perfect or complete as people by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ through His sacred and holy Atonement. Alma taught:

And we see that death comes upon mankind, . . . which is the temporal death; nevertheless there was a space granted unto man in which he might *repent*; therefore this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless state which has been spoken of by us, which is after the resurrection of the dead.

Now, if it had not been for the plan of redemption, which was laid from the foundation of the world, there could have been no resurrection of the dead; but there was a plan of redemption laid, which shall bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, of which has been spoken. (Alma 12:24–25, emphasis added)

Alma continued with an explanation of death and its purpose:

It was appointed unto men that they must die; and after death, they must come to judgment, even that same judgment of which we have spoken, which is the end.

And after God had appointed that these things should come unto man, behold, then he saw that it was expedient that man should know concerning the things whereof he had appointed unto them;

Therefore he sent angels to converse with them, who caused men to behold of his glory. (Alma 12:27–29)

God’s laws are essential for agency, but they are not enough. People must have knowledge of His laws, which is why He sends angels to inform prophets, who teach them.<sup>5</sup> Laws and knowledge of them are not enough. People must also be free to make choices about the direction of their lives. Thus governments are necessary to protect and defend, giving individuals what Elder McConkie called the “unfettered power of choice.”<sup>6</sup>

Elder Cook taught: “To receive the blessings of the Savior’s Atonement, we must affirmatively exercise our moral agency to choose Christ and obey His commandments. . . . Agency is the ability to choose and act. It is essential to the plan of salvation. Without moral agency, we could not learn, progress, or choose to be one with Christ. . . . Our faith in and worship of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, is a choice that we make.”<sup>7</sup>

Elder Anderson tells a story from his days as a mission president, hearing Elder Neal A. Maxwell’s answer to a missionary’s question about creating a desire in those he was teaching: “You can build upon his desire,” taught Elder Maxwell, “but he alone must initiate the desire.”<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, even the desire to believe is a choice.

Alma, in the Book of Mormon, answered a question similar to the young missionary’s. The prophet taught,

But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than *desire to believe*, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words. (Alma 32:27, emphasis added)

Neither the Islamic way of militant Jihad nor the Christian response via the Crusades is the way of Christ the Lord. Force cannot accomplish anything of lasting value. Jesus invited His listeners to believe the higher law of His gospel. He never compelled them to believe. People choose to accept the invitation or not. As members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we invite friends to come unto Christ through the restoration of His gospel to Joseph Smith and the prophets who come after him. People’s response to the invitation does not affect how we accept or love them as friends and neighbors.



**VIEW NORTH:** THE SOUTHERN SLOPE OF THE HORNS OF HATTIN IS ANOTHER PLACE WHERE SOME CHRISTIANS BELIEVE JESUS GAVE THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (MATT. 5-7; SEE THE PHOTO ON PAGE 201).

**BELOW (VIEW SOUTH):** THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN FROM THE TOP OF THE WOODEN STAIRS (ABOVE PHOTO) LEADING UP THE HILL. IT LOOKS DOWN ON THE FIELD WHERE PEOPLE MAY HAVE SAT DURING CHRIST'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.





**VIEW NORTH:** MOUNT OF BEATITUDES AT THE HORNS OF HATTIN. THE OTHER TRADITIONAL MOUNT OF BEATITUDES SITE IS ABOVE TABGHA ON THE NORTHERN SHORE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE (SEE “MOUNT OF BEATITUDES” ON PAGE 229).

## ENDNOTES

1 *Jihad* is an Arabic word meaning “strive” or “make a determined effort.” As a military term, jihad is the collective duty of Muslims to expand the territory of Islam and resist foreign aggression. We saw this with Saladin. Jihad was the basis for conquering Jerusalem in 635 AD after the prophet Muhammad’s night journey to the Holy City in 621 AD. It was also the basis for defending Jerusalem against the Crusades five hundred years later. The Muslims’ presence in the Holy Land began with conquest. The land became their own after five hundred years of occupation. Jihad has another, maybe more important meaning for individuals who embrace it. It is an inner struggle to purify one’s heart, do good, and avoid evil. It is also an outward struggle to be honest and speak the truth. These two meanings of jihad conflict when radical Islamists call for a military jihad to kill Jews and other Westerners who oppose them.

2 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. “Saladin,” by Paul E. Walker, last modified May 27, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saladin>.

3 Koran, Al-Nisaa 4:36.

4 Gerrit W. Gong, “All Things for Our Good,” *Liabona* (May 2024), Gospel Library.

5 Moroni taught the following: “For behold, God knowing all things, being from everlasting to everlasting, behold, he sent angels to minister unto the children of men, to make manifest concerning the coming of Christ; and in Christ there should come every good thing. . . . Wherefore, by the ministering of angels, and by every word which proceeded forth out of the mouth of God, men began to exercise faith in Christ; and thus by faith, they did lay hold upon every good thing; and thus it was until the coming of Christ” (Moroni 7:22, 25).

6 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 26.

7 Quentin L. Cook, “Be One with Christ,” *Liabona* (May 2024), Gospel Library. Elder Cook said this about his grandfather: “He told me my focus should be on the Savior and the Savior’s Atonement. He said we are all children of a loving Heavenly Father. Regardless of who our earthly ancestors are, each of us will report to the Savior on how well we kept His commandments.”

8 Rachel Sterzer Gibson, “BYU Education Week: Elder Andersen Speaks of ‘Profoundly Important’ Topic—‘The Educating of Our Righteous Desires,’” *Church News*, Aug. 21, 2024, <https://www.thechurchnews.com/leaders/2024/08/21/elder-neil-l-andersen-byu-education-week-2024-educate-spiritual-desires>.