The Crusades

The Age of Faith also inspired wars of conquest. In 1093, the Byzantine emperor Alexius Comnenus sent an appeal to Robert, Count of Flanders. The emperor asked for help against the Muslim Turks. They were threatening to conquer his capital, Constantinople:

**PRIMARY SOURCE**

Come then, with all your people and give battle with all your strength, so that all this treasure shall not fall into the hands of the Turks. . . . Therefore act while there is still time lest the kingdom of the Christians shall vanish from your sight and, what is more important, the Holy Sepulchre [the tomb where Jesus was buried] shall vanish. And in your coming you will find your reward in heaven, and if you do not come, God will condemn you.

**EMPEROR ALEXIUS COMNENUS, quoted in The Dream and the Tomb by Robert Payne**

Pope Urban II also read that letter. Shortly after this appeal, he issued a call for what he termed a “holy war,” a **Crusade**, to gain control of the Holy Land. Over the next 300 years, a number of such Crusades were launched.

**Goals of the Crusades** The Crusades had economic, social, and political goals as well as religious motives. Muslims controlled Palestine (the Holy Land) and threatened Constantinople. The Byzantine emperor in Constantinople appealed to Christians to stop Muslim attacks. In addition, the pope wanted to reclaim Palestine and reunite Christendom, which had split into Eastern and Western branches in 1054.

In addition, kings and the Church both saw the Crusades as an opportunity to get rid of quarrelsome knights who fought each other. These knights threatened the peace of the kingdoms, as well as Church property.

Others who participated in the Crusades were younger sons who, unlike eldest sons, did not stand to inherit their father’s property. They were looking for land and a position in society, or for adventure.

In the later Crusades, merchants profited by making cash loans to finance the journey. They also leased their ships for a hefty fee to transport armies over the Mediterranean Sea. In addition, the merchants of Pisa, Genoa, and Venice hoped to win control of key trade routes to India, Southeast Asia, and China from Muslim traders.

**The First and Second Crusades** Pope Urban’s call brought a tremendous outpouring of religious feeling and support for the Crusade. According to the pope, those who died on Crusade were assured of a place in heaven. With red crosses sewn on tunics worn over their armor and the battle cry of “God wills it!” on their lips, knights and commoners were fired by religious zeal and became Crusaders.

By early 1097, three armies of knights and people of all classes had gathered outside Constantinople. Most of the Crusaders were French, but Bohemians, Germans, Englishmen, Scots, Italians, and Spaniards came as well. The Crusaders were ill-prepared for war in this First Crusade. Many knew nothing of the geography, climate, or culture of the Holy Land. They had no grand strategy to capture Jerusalem. The nobles argued among themselves and couldn’t agree on a leader. Finally an army of 12,000 (less than one-fourth of the original army) approached Jerusalem. The Crusaders besieged the city for over a month. On July 15, 1099, they captured the city.
All in all, the Crusaders had won a narrow strip of land. It stretched about 650 miles from Edessa in the north to Jerusalem in the south. Four feudal Crusader states were carved out of this territory, each ruled by a European noble.

The Crusaders’ states were extremely vulnerable to Muslim counterattack. In 1144, Edessa was reconquered by the Turks. The Second Crusade was organized to recapture the city. But its armies straggled home in defeat. In 1187, Europeans were shocked to learn that Jerusalem itself had fallen to a Kurdish warrior and Muslim leader Saladin (SAL•uh•dihn).

The Third Crusade

The Third Crusade to recapture Jerusalem was led by three of Europe’s most powerful monarchs. They were Philip II (Augustus) of France, German emperor Frederick I (Barbarossa), and the English king, Richard the Lion-Hearted. Philip argued with Richard and went home. Barbarossa drowned on the journey. So, Richard was left to lead the Crusaders in an attempt to regain the Holy Land from Saladin. Both Richard and Saladin were brilliant warriors. After many battles, the two agreed to a truce in 1192. Jerusalem remained under Muslim control. In return, Saladin promised that unarmed Christian pilgrims could freely visit the city’s holy places.

The Crusading Spirit Dwindles

In 1204, the Fourth Crusade to capture Jerusalem failed. The knights did not reach the Holy Land. Instead, they ended up looting the city of Constantinople. In the 1200s, four more Crusades to free the holy land were also unsuccessful. The religious spirit of the First Crusade faded, and the search for personal gain grew. In two later Crusades, armies marched not to the Holy Land but to Egypt. The Crusaders intended to weaken Muslim forces there before going to the Holy Land. But none of these attempts conquered much land.
Chapter 14

The Children’s Crusade

The Children’s Crusade took place in 1212. In two different movements, thousands of children set out to conquer Jerusalem. One group in France was led by 12-year-old Stephen of Cloyes. An estimated 30,000 children under 18 joined him. They were armed only with the belief that God would give them Jerusalem. On their march south to the Mediterranean, many died from cold and starvation. The rest drowned at sea or were sold into slavery.

In Germany, Nicholas of Cologne gathered about 20,000 children and young adults. They began marching toward Rome. Thousands died in the cold and treacherous crossing of the Alps. Those who survived the trip to Italy finally did meet the pope. He told them to go home and wait until they were older. About 2,000 survived the return trip to Germany. A few boarded a ship for the Holy Land and were never heard of again.

A Spanish Crusade

In Spain, Muslims (called Moors) controlled most of the country until the 1100s. The Reconquista (reh-kawn-KEES-tah) was a long effort by the Spanish to drive the Muslims out of Spain. By the late 1400s, the Muslims held only the tiny kingdom of Granada. In 1492, Granada finally fell to the Christian army of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Spanish monarchs.

To unify their country under Christianity and to increase their power, Isabella and Ferdinand made use of the Inquisition. This was a court held by the Church to suppress heresy. Heretics were people whose religious beliefs differed from the teachings of the Church. Many Jews and Muslims in Spain converted to Christianity during the late 1400s. Even so, the inquisitors suspected these Jewish and Muslim converts of heresy. A person suspected of heresy might be questioned for weeks and even tortured. Once suspects confessed, they were often burned at the stake. In 1492,
the monarchs expelled all practicing Jews and Muslims from Spain.

**The Effects of the Crusades**

The Crusades are a forceful example of the power of the Church during the medieval period. The call to go to the Holy Land encouraged thousands to leave their homes and travel to faraway lands. For those who stayed home, especially women, it meant a chance to manage affairs on the estates or to operate shops and inns.

European merchants who lived and traded in the Crusader states expanded trade between Europe and Southwest Asia. The goods imported from Southwest Asia included spices, fruits, and cloth. This trade with the West benefited both Christians and Muslims.

However, the failure of later Crusades also lessened the power of the pope. The Crusades weakened the feudal nobility and increased the power of kings. Thousands of knights and other participants lost their lives and fortunes. The fall of Constantinople weakened the Byzantine Empire.

For Muslims, the intolerance and prejudice displayed by Christians in the Holy Land left behind a legacy of bitterness and hatred. This legacy continues to the present. For Christians and Jews who remained in the Muslim controlled region after the fall of the Crusader states, relations with the Muslim leadership worsened. For Jews in Europe, the Crusades were a time of increased persecution.

The Crusades grew out of religious fervor, feudalism, and chivalry, which came together with explosive energy. This same energy led to the growth of trade, towns, and universities in medieval Europe.

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**SECTION ASSESSMENT**

**TERMS & NAMES** 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.
- simony
- Gothic
- Urban II
- Crusade
- Saladin
- Richard the Lion-Hearted
- Reconquista
- Inquisition

**USING YOUR NOTES**

2. Which of the events of the Age of Faith do you think was most important to the Church? Explain.

**MAIN IDEAS**

3. What were three main causes of the need to reform the Church?
4. Which Crusade was the only successful one?
5. How did the goals of the Crusades change over the years?

**CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING**

6. **FORMING AND SUPPORTING OPINIONS** Which of the following do you think best represents the spirit of the Age of Faith—Church reform, the Crusades, or the Gothic cathedrals? Explain.
7. **MAKING INFERENCES** What evidence supports the idea that the Church functioned like a kingdom?
8. **RECOGNIZING EFFECTS** How did the Crusades change the history of Europe? Give reasons for your answer.
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** Write a script about an encounter between a Crusader and a Muslim defender of Jerusalem.

**INTERNET ACTIVITY**

Review the information on page 381. Use the Internet to research the Washington National Cathedral. Prepare a multimedia presentation showing the Gothic characteristics of the Washington National Cathedral.

**INTERNET KEYWORD**

Washington National Cathedral