

The First Crusade, 1095-1099

In 1095 Pope Urban II declared a crusade to win back the holy city of Jerusalem from the Muslims. Thousands of people from across Europe agreed to go on Crusade. Initially the Crusaders suffered from the burning heat and Muslim ambushes. The Crusaders managed to capture the major city of Antioch before attacking Jerusalem. In the summer of 1099 the Crusaders finally took control of Jerusalem, killing thousands of Muslims, including women and children living inside. The Christian world made prayers of thanks that Jerusalem had been captured for Christianity, but the Muslim world was filled with horror.

The Second Crusade, 1145-1149

Although the Christians and Muslims had been living near each other for some time, fighting again started in 1145. The Muslims attacked and captured the city of Edessa, which had been conquered by the Crusaders in 1098. The Pope sent thousands of Crusaders to the Holy Land to defend Jerusalem in case the Muslims attacked further, but on the way many Crusaders fell sick and died. Many more died of starvation or from Muslim attacks. The Crusaders tried to attack the Muslim city of Damascus, but after five days of fighting they could not succeed. The Crusaders returned to Europe having failed to defeat the Muslims – although they still held Jerusalem.

The Battle of Hattin, 1187

Over time the Muslims began to threaten the city of Jerusalem again. The Muslim leader was a man called **Saladin** who was very successful in battle. To defend Jerusalem the Christians marched to attack Saladin at a place called Hattin, but it went horribly wrong, as they were without water and weak. Many of the Christians died, and their army was defeated. Saladin was now in a very strong position, and so he attacked Jerusalem. On 2nd October 1187 Saladin recaptured Jerusalem for the Muslims. Saladin treated the Christians in Jerusalem relatively well, and he let Christians come to visit the city on pilgrimage.

The Third Crusade, 1189-1192

The fall of Jerusalem shocked the Christian world: the Pope is said to have died of grief! In 1189 several kings – including Richard I (the Lionheart) of England – led the Third Crusade to free Jerusalem. The kings argued, however, and could not agree who was in charge. One of the kings actually drowned while he was bathing in the river! In any case, the Christians managed to capture several important cities, although it grew too hot for them to capture Jerusalem, and Richard became ill. He knew he couldn't hold Jerusalem (he didn't have enough men) even if he did capture it. In 1192 the Crusaders went home with Jerusalem still belonging to the Muslims.

The Fourth Crusade. 1202-1204

Pope Innocent III began the Fourth Crusade, hoping it would unite the Christians of the world, and take control of Muslim Egypt. There were at this time two types of Christians – the western Catholic Church based in Rome, and the eastern Church in Constantinople. On the way to Jerusalem the Crusaders stopped in the important city of Constantinople, the centre of eastern Christianity. However the Crusaders attacked the city to steal its wealth and killed many of the Christians inside: it was Christians killing Christians. None of the Crusaders made it as far as Jerusalem.

The Children's Crusade, 1212

The Fourth Crusade had been a huge embarrassment for the Christians. In 1212 most unusual of all the Crusades set off: thousands of young children left France to march to Jerusalem. They were convinced that God would guide them to the Holy Land and bring them victory against Muslim armies. They were led by a 12 year-old shepherd, Stephen of Cloyes. On the way they became very tired, and when they finally boarded boats to sail to the Holy Land they were either shipwrecked or captured by pirates who sold them into slavery.