



A brief summary of the Crusades

The **first** Crusade which began in 1096 was formed mostly of thieves and criminals. This was the consequence of the Council of Clermont in 1095 in which the Pope Urban II proclaimed that anyone who joined the Crusade would be forgiven for all his sins and would be relieved of any criminal penance he might owe.

As a result of the decree of the Council of Clermont, anyone who had committed some wrong action, from theft to murder, flocked under the banner of the cross. The rabble of 60,000 men and women pillaged their way across Europe. Led by Godfrey, they eventually reached Jerusalem in July 1099. After a five-week siege, the knights of the First Crusade and their army captured Jerusalem, massacring most of the city's non-Christian inhabitants. Muslims and Jews alike were burnt alive or sold into slavery. The Christian accounts of the conquest talk of Muslims being boiled alive and their children being cooked alive over fires and then eaten. More than 70,000 Muslims were slaughtered. During the next few decades, the Crusaders extended their power over the rest of the country, through treaties and agreements, but mostly by bloody military victories. The Latin Kingdom of the Crusaders was that of a conquering minority confined mainly to fortified cities and castles.

Following the Crusades success in conquering Jerusalem, three huge armies set from Europe. Their aim was make further conquests including taking Bagdad. Unlike the previous crusader army, this army was professional, better equipped and numbered several hundred thousand men. However, they were not to reach the Holy Land. In 1101, an alliance of Turkish armies completely wiped out the Crusader army before they could enter the Middle East.

However around Palestine and Lebanon the Crusaders captured many important costal towns allowing reinforcements to be sent by sea.

The **Second** Crusade was undertaken in 1147 following the Muslim reconquest of the strategically important town of Edessa. Three hundred and fifty thousand crusaders marched from Europe but were defeated by the army of Nur Eddin Zangi near Damascus although the bulk of the army managed to escape. A reinforcement army from France was ambushed and wiped out by the Turks. A further army of 100,000 crusaders reached Damascus in 1148, and this time they were almost completely annihilated by the army of Nur Eddin Zangi.

After the death of Nur Eddin Zang, Salah Uddin Ayubi took charge of the Muslim army, fighting both the Crusaders and their Ismaili allies. In July 1187, the famous battle of Hattin took place in which the grand master of the templar knights was captured as well as many famous barons and knights. Only 200 crusaders survived.

On Friday 2nd October 1187 Jerusalem was reconquered by the Salah Uddin. Unlike the bloodbath that followed the christain conquest a century earlier, there was no massacre of civilians. The Christians were given a choice to remain or to leave and many chose to remain.

In less than three years, the whole of Palestine and Syria which had been conquered by the crusaders over 60 years, fell under the army of Salah Uddin. The Pope Urban III died when he heard the news of the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem.

The **Third Crusade**, was led by, among others, King Richard of England, King Phillips of France and the Fredrick I, the Holy Roman Emperor. Navy ships were also sent. Frederick drowned enroute in 1190, and his army of 200,000 was wiped out by the Turks (only 5,000 survived).

This left an unstable alliance between the English and the French. The French King decided to go back home leaving King Richard of England. After a two-year siege, King Richard captured the city of Acre and executed the entire Muslim garrison. The Crusader army headed south along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. They defeated the Muslims, recaptured the port city of Jaffa, and were in sight of Jerusalem. However, Richard did not believe he would be able to hold Jerusalem once it was captured. Richard left the following year after negotiating a treaty with Saladin. The treaty allowed unarmed Christian pilgrims to make pilgrimages to the Holy Land (Jerusalem), while it remained under Muslim control. In 1192, Salah Uddin died.

The Fourth Crusade was initiated in 1202 by Pope Innocent III, with the intention of invading the Holy Land through Egypt. Because the Crusaders lacked the funds to pay for the fleet and provisions that they had contracted from the Venice, they decided to go to Constantinople and ended up fighting their fellow Christians. The churches were ransacked, and the booty from them greatly increased the wealth of the Roman Catholic Church:

The fifth Crusade: In 1215 the Church launched the **fifth crusade** for the recovery of the Holy Land. The crusader forces consisting of Italians, Germans, French and Austrians captured of the port of Damietta in Egypt in 1219, and then launched an attack on Cairo in July of 1221. The crusaders were turned back after their dwindling supplies led to a forced retreat. A night-time attack by the ruler of Egypt, the powerful Sultan Al-Kamil, resulted in a great number of crusader losses and eventually in the surrender of the army. Al-Kamil agreed to an eight-year peace agreement with Europe.

Following this, the first Mongol invasion in 1219 led to the death of millions of Muslims.

Sixth Crusade 1228–12: .In 1229 after failing to conquer Egypt, Frederick II of the Holy Roman Empire, made his way to Palestine. Without a single arrow being fired Al-Kamil, the ruler of Egypt, handed over Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Bethlehem to the crusaders, while the Muslims were given control of the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aksa mosque. Many of the Muslims though were not happy with Al-Kamil for giving up control of Jerusalem

In 1244, the Mamluks under the leadership of Rukn Eddin Baybars sent an army to liberate Jerusalem from the crusaders. In the famous battle of Gaza, the Mamluks faced a crusader army of 30,000. Within a few hours, the whole crusader army was destroyed and the Muslims regained control of Jerusalem

Seventh Crusade: Louis IX of France organized a crusade against Egypt from 1248 to 1254. In 1249, the port of Damietta was abandoned allowing the crusaders to take it without a fight. In 1250, the crusaders marched out of the port city to capture the rest of Egypt, causing panic amongst civilians and the fleeing Muslim army. Only the Mamluk soldiers under the command of Rukn Eddin Baybars were not seized by the widespread panic. The crusader army was destroyed by the Mamluks, with only five templar knights surviving the

battle. 30,000 crusaders were killed and 10,000 including King Louise of France were taken prisoner.

The Mongols

In 1258, the Mongols, with the help of the Shia, captured Baghdad, killing almost a million Muslims, and putting an end to the Caliphate. Following this, with the help of local Christians, they conquered large parts of Syria. Only the conquest of Egypt remained in order to complete the destruction of Muslims. On the 3rd September 1260, the Mongol army marched to Ain Jalout in Palestine in order to conquer Egypt, Facing them was the Muslim Mamluk army under General Kutz. In the ensuing battle, the Mongol army was decimated. Many historians state that this was one of the most decisive battles in history.

The Eighth Crusade: 1271-2: After the death of Kutz, the Mamluks general Baybars continued to recapture land from the crusaders in Lebanon. Baybars was now fighting a Mongol-Crusader alliance. Many important templar castles and cities were captured by the Mamluks. In 1260, the city of Antioch which the crusaders had held for 171 years fell to the Muslim army.

In 1271, King Edward of England launched a fresh crusade sending envoys to the Mongols asking for assistance. The Mongols sent 10,000 horsemen but fled on hearing of advancing Mamluk army. King Edward then had a change of heart, and marched back to England.

Following this, huge battles continued between the Mamluks and Mongols and their Christian allies. After delivering a crushing defeat to the Mongols in Hims in 1281, the Mamluks once again turned their attention to the remaining crusader strongholds. After the Muslim conquest of Tripoli and Acre, the kingdom of the crusaders came to a end.

The crusades and the subsequent Mongol onslaught had been defeated at a cost of between five and ten million Muslim lives, the vast majority civilians.