

# Timeline of the Crusades

## **The People's Crusade: 1096 (April to October)**

*To conquer the Holy Land*

## **The First Crusade: 1096 to 1099**

*To conquer the Holy Land*

## **The Years After the First Crusade: 1099 to 1144**

*Knights Templar and Hospitallers created*

## **The Second Crusade: 1145 to 1149**

*To recapture the Holy Land*

## **The Third Crusade: 1189 to 1192**

*To recapture the Holy Land*

## **The Fourth Crusade: 1202 to 1204**

*To capture Constantinople*

## **The Children's Crusade: 1212**

*To bring goodness and innocence to quest*

## **The Fifth Crusade: 1217 to 1221**

*To establish secure base in Egypt*

## **The Sixth Crusade: 1228**

*To recapture the Holy Land*

## **The Seventh Crusade: 1248 to 1254**

*To capture a base in Egypt and regain the Holy Land*

## **The Eighth Crusade: 1270-1291**

*To convert Bay of Tunis to Christianity and recapture holy places in the Holy Land*

# The People's Crusade

As the pope was getting knights, warriors, supplies and plans collected, the story of a great crusade spread through the countryside. Common people wanted to join up and they eventually chose as their leader a man known in history as "Little Peter." In 1096, Peter led a band of uneducated and unprepared people in what is now known as the People's Crusade. In order to make the journey, though, the crusaders needed money. The common people preparing to leave with Little Peter for the Holy Land found the money in the only place they could justify. Throughout Europe, 10,000 Jews were stabbed, dismembered and killed for their gold by the Christian crusaders. When this particular holocaust was finished, the People's Crusade had plenty of money and over 100,000 followers.

Little Peter's army was rich but not well-led or well-trained. The army trashed and pillaged Christian towns as it traveled. When it finally did arrive in Byzantine and met with Emperor Comena, it was a terrifying band of wild people. Comena helped Little Peter's army get through his country and on toward the Turks, who promptly slaughtered the soldiers. The better-looking people were sold into slavery, but most died. The year was 1096.

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# The Years After the First Crusade

Christians were in control of the Holy Land, but as the years passed, they became spoiled and lazy. When they did go back to central Europe, they brought with them riches, fine spices, exotic jewelry, beautiful women, wonderful fabrics and tales of adventure and land to be taken. On top of that, the newly seated pope, Paschal II, was preaching that more armies must go to reinforce the conquests earned by the First Crusade. According to Paschal, the fight against the Muslim people was not over, so many groups formed to continue and support the battle. Two of those were monks called the Knights Templar and the Knights of Saint John.

The Knights Templar were formidable and holy killers who vowed to protect all crusading travelers. They answered only to the pope and had very strict rules for themselves. Still, they managed to become very rich because nobles and common people who couldn't crusade but wanted the church's blessings gave them money. The Knights Templar wore long, white robes with red crosses over their armor.

The Knights of Saint John were better known as the Hospitallers because they originally worked in a hospital and cared for travelers. They, like the Knights Templar before them, turned to violence and war to further the interests of Christians in the Holy Land. They also became very wealthy. They wore black robes over their armor and had white crosses sewn to their sleeves.

A Muslim leader named Zengi managed to overtake a large Christian city called Edessa. He killed all the invading western Christians, but spared the eastern, or Byzantine, Christians. Still, his act scared the western church. Pope Eugenius III announced that a new army must be raised. The year was 1144.

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# The Second Crusade

The Second Crusade was only talk and tales until a very persuasive speaker named Bernard of Clairvaux started selling the idea. He spoke of the “horrors” of the Holy Land falling into unbelievers’ hands and promised that God would reward the souls of those who fought for him. Bernard’s power of persuasion was amazing. People listened and vowed to follow.

In 1145, two kings, Louis VII and the Holy Roman Emperor Conrad II, amassed their armies and headed for Jerusalem. Almost 1 million people were involved in the Second Crusade. The crusaders changed direction for an unknown reason, and instead of attacking the Muslims who overthrew Edessa, they attacked the only Muslim friends the Christians had, who lived in the city of Damascus. This strategy only helped to unite all the Muslim nations together against the Christians.

Once the crusaders were outside the walls of Damascus and the city's Muslim people sent notice of surrender to them, the victorious crusaders milled about a bit and then left. They never even entered the city and to this day no one knows why. They packed up and went home. The only thing they accomplished was to make the Muslim nations more solidified.

Years later, a Sunni Muslim of Kurdish descent built his own army. Historically, he is known as Saladin. His hope was to further the unintended result of the Second Crusade by joining all Muslim forces together under one leader. He conquered all of Egypt and then officially took back Jerusalem from the Christians knights who conquered it. To make his point, he didn't harm the common Christians but he allowed the captured Christian knights to be beheaded by people unskilled in the art. It took a great many chops and swings, and the unfortunate people bled to death before the heads were finally removed. Jerusalem was once again a Muslim city. The year was 1149.

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# The Third Crusade

Pope Gregory VII said sinful people were the reason Jerusalem had fallen into Muslim hands again. He taxed the common people to build up enough money to send out a third crusading army. These crusades must have been quite a headache for the poor commoners. As all this was happening, King Richard ruled England, but he didn't care much about his country. He used his title to raid the churches and countryside and then in 1189 left on the Third Crusade. King Phillip of France and his armies joined him along the way. They decided to go by ship rather than by land as the ones before them had gone. Along the way, King Richard conquered Sicily and Cyprus with brutal ease. This built up his reputation and earned him the name Richard the Lionheart.

Eventually the French armies under King Phillip returned home and Richard went on by himself. He conquered the city of Acre, sending word that he wanted to meet with Saladin. Saladin didn't respond quickly enough, so Richard took 3,000 captured Muslim men, women and children to a hillside within view of Saladin and had the innocent people slaughtered to show the Muslim warrior and king the power of a Christian warrior and king.

The two great leaders fought on against each other in many different cities and became respectful enemies. It is said that Richard could ride in front of the army of Saladin unarmed and not be attacked because those warriors had too much respect for his abilities. Eventually Richard the Lionheart and Saladin drew up a truce. Some of the Holy Land went to the Christians and some to the Muslims. Saladin still held Jerusalem, but he allowed Christians to make pilgrimages freely. The agreement was only for three years only because Richard believed he could return and retake Jerusalem. He never did. The year was 1192.

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# The Fourth Crusade

The Fourth Crusade was launched in 1202 at the command of Pope Innocent III. He couldn't get anyone to listen to him until he threatened to excommunicate anyone who didn't agree. A tax was imposed on all Christendom, and French and Venetian armies gathered their forces.

The Venetians were having a hard time getting enough money or supplies, however, so they convinced the French army to join them in the destruction of a Christian seaport called Zara. They earned the money they needed, but they also earned a sentence of excommunication by the pope.

Remember, Byzantine was the eastern half of Christendom and the pope would have very much liked to have had it under his control. Word was sent from Byzantine and its capital of Constantinople that the emperor there had been deposed and blinded by his brother. The pope declared that if the crusaders would get involved in that battle and return the throne to the correct brother, all would be forgiven. So the Venetian and French Christian crusaders forgot about the Muslim people and went to attack the Christian capital of Constantinople instead.

Eventually, the combined forces conquered Constantinople with the use of special bridges. The bridges attached to the masts of ships and then to the city walls. Crusading soldiers were able to invade the watchtowers simultaneously and quickly overran the entire city. The crusading army did a bit more than chase the bad brother off one of the city walls to his death. They also murdered and raped the Christian people of Constantinople including the nuns; burned down libraries containing the only copies of ancient Greek texts; removed all the gold, jewels and holy relics from churches; and melted down ancient Greek statues for their metal. Needless to say, the people of that area weren't too interested in merging their form of eastern Christianity with the western kind they saw in the crusaders. Byzantine was no longer. (The eastern Roman Empire declined, but it held out until 1453.) It was renamed Romania, and the eastern and western church factions never were united. The crusaders never did get near Jerusalem. The year was 1204.

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# The Children's Crusade

The Crusades until now haven't been very successful or what we would call very Christian. It is important to remember that in that time, there were sincere attempts at reforming the world in the name of God. Most of the crusaders then believed in the right and goodness of what they were doing. Some, however, saw the Crusades as a get-rich scheme. When independent pride and greed got in the way, things went sour. Eventually, someone came up with the idea that simple goodness and innocence were necessary for this crusade idea to work. That person was a German youth named Nicholas.

In 1212, 30,000 children looking for adventure, truly believing and just wanting to escape home followed Nicholas across the Alps and toward the sea, where they hoped to be able to sail to the Holy Land. Instead, those who survived the trip were gathered by a Norwegian man, who sold them into slavery and prostitution.

A similar group of 20,000 French children followed a boy named Stephen. When they reached the sea, they were permitted to board seven ships. Two of those ships sank and the children drowned. The other five docked in Africa, where the children were immediately sold into slavery.

This hopeless and sad tale didn't kill off the crusader fever. The pope announced that anyone could join a crusade without permission. Peasants didn't need to ask the permission of their lords; they could just go. And despite what happened to the children, many did long to make the journey. The year was 1212.

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# The Fifth Crusade

In 1215, the church divided up Europe into taxation sections and imposed new taxes to support the crusades. Each person was responsible for paying a penny a week – a huge sum at that time. In 1217, the Fifth Crusade was outfitted and ready to leave. The army planned to enter Jerusalem by way of the sea and then across the Nile River.

At this time, the Muslim world was ruled by Saladin's nephew, al-Kamil. He offered the crusaders an unbelievable deal – they could simply have the Holy Land, no questions asked. The pope, however, wanted them to hold out for all of Egypt, too. He knew that Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II was headed in that direction with an army.

Frederick never showed up, though. The crusaders were led into Egypt by a Roman Cardinal named Pelagius. They camped on a flat area between two threads of the Nile River, which they were unaware was a flood plain. The Muslims knew. They opened the barriers, and the Fifth Crusade washed away in the night. The year was 1221.

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# The Sixth Crusade

Remember the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II from the previous crusade? He was the one who never showed up. It turns out that he had gotten far enough east to adopt some of the eastern and Arab habits. He read the Koran; he studied Islam; he smoked hashish; he even kept a harem. Despite the warnings and anger of the pope, Frederick never really got all bothered about fighting for Jerusalem. It seems not too much at all bothered him. He even made friends with the leader of the Arab/Muslim world, al-Kamil.

Al-Kamul was having a bit of trouble. His own brother was trying to take his power. Al-Kamul told Frederick about it and finally, in 1228, Frederick decided to go fight. But he was going to fight for the Muslims and al-Kamul. He was supposed to be fighting against them.

By the time Frederick arrived with his army, the brother issue had been handled. The two leaders sat down and talked. They decided the Christians could have everything they wanted regarding Jerusalem, as long as Muslims were still allowed to worship there. In return, the Christians would promise to help the Muslims if they needed it in fighting the advancing horde of Mongols who were coming from the east.

Jerusalem was once again open to Christians and Muslims both, but the pope was still so angry at Frederick, he excommunicated him and the whole city of Jerusalem. The city was open, but now no Christian could travel there and still be considered a Christian. The year was 1228.

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# The Seventh Crusade

The pope, who still was furious with Frederick, announced a new crusade in 1248. The twist was that this time it was against Frederick himself, the guy who made it possible (and impossible) for Christians to go to Jerusalem. Christians were once again taxed to pay for a march to Jerusalem. They were getting a bit tired of it all, to say the least.

The new and Seventh Crusade was led by Louis IX of France. He was a good and Christian man who decided to attack when he heard that Turkish Muslims had overrun Jerusalem and slaughtered countless innocents. Even the Knights Templar and the Hospitallers couldn't fight against these wild men. The Holy Land was completely Muslim now and no Christian was safe there.

Despite King Louis' good character and plans, his armies were no match for the Muslim armies. It didn't help that much of Louis' army was dying of dysentery. Some historians say it was so bad that men simply cut holes in the back of their britches. That had to make "turning tail" and running a bit awkward, but King Louis was forced to retreat and regroup. The Seventh Crusade was over. The year was 1254.

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# The Eighth Crusade

King Louis of France wasn't ready to give up. In 1270, he negotiated with those scary hordes, the Mongols, mentioned in the Sixth Crusade. He figured Christians and the Mongols could combine forces and finally drive the Muslim people out of the Holy Land. He knew that in them he had a great weapon.

But the Muslims had a great weapon, too. There was a practice at the time of abducting young Russian slaves, forcing them to convert to Islam, bringing them into the Muslim world and training them to become extremely cruel warriors who would protect the most important leaders. These slave children were raised without any mercy, so they knew none. They were called Mamelukes and they were some of the meanest people in all of history. At one point, an Arab Muslim leader had tried to get rid of his protective Mameluke warriors and they got rid of him instead. That's how Qutuz, the Mameluke Muslim, came to power. Qutuz and his army easily decimated the feared Mongols. Now that's just scary.

King Louis was on his own now. His Mongol surprise wasn't going to work. On top of that, he found only 10,000 people willing to march in the Eighth Crusade. When the crusaders' ships landed in Africa, King Louis died of a stomach problem and the final crusade collapsed. He was later canonized as Saint Louis. In the meantime, the Mamelukes killed off all Christian knights and people anywhere in the Holy Land. It was over. The Arab nations ruled the land that had been fought over for so long. The year was 1291.