

## The Crusades

### What were the Crusades?

By the end of the 11th century, Western Europe had emerged as a significant power in its own right, though it still lagged behind other Mediterranean civilizations, such as that of the Byzantine Empire (formerly the eastern half of the Roman Empire) and the Islamic Empire of the Middle East and North Africa. The Crusades set the stage for several religious knightly military orders, including the Knights Templar, the Teutonic Knights, and the Hospitallers. These groups defended the Holy Land and protected pilgrims traveling to and from the region.

**The People's Crusade (1096-99)** Four armies of Crusaders were formed from troops of different Western European regions, led by Raymond of Saint-Gilles, Godfrey of Bouillon, Hugh of Vermandois and Bohemond of Taranto (with his nephew Tancred). These groups departed for Byzantium in August 1096. A less organized band of knights and commoners known as the "People's Crusade" set off before the others under the command of a popular preacher known as Peter the Hermit. Ignoring Alexius' advice to wait for the rest of the Crusaders, Peter's army crossed the Bosphorus in early August. In the first major clash between the Crusaders and Muslims, Turkish forces crushed the invading Europeans at Ciboctus. Another group of Crusaders, led by the notorious Count

Emicho, carried out a series of massacres of Jews in various towns in the Rhineland in 1096, drawing widespread outrage and causing a major crisis in Jewish-Christian relations.

### **Third Crusade (1187-92)**

After numerous attempts by the Crusaders of Jerusalem to capture Egypt, Nur al-Din's forces (led by the general Shirkuh and his nephew, Saladin) seized Cairo in 1169 and forced the Crusader army to evacuate. Upon Shirkuh's subsequent death, Saladin assumed control and began a campaign of conquests that accelerated after Nur al-Din's death in 1174. In 1187, Saladin began a major campaign against the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. His troops virtually destroyed the Christian army at the battle of Hattin, taking back the important city along with a large amount of territory.



Outrage over these defeats inspired the Third Crusade, led by rulers such as the aging Emperor Frederick Barbarossa (who was drowned at Anatolia before his entire army reached Syria), King Philip II of France, and King Richard I of England (known as Richard the Lionheart). In September 1191, Richard's forces defeated those of Saladin in the battle of Arsuf, which would be the only true battle of the Third Crusade. From the recaptured city of Jaffa, Richard re-established Christian control over some of the region and approached Jerusalem, though he refused to lay siege to the city. In September 1192, Richard and Saladin signed a peace treaty that re-established the Kingdom of Jerusalem (though without the city of Jerusalem) and ended the Third Crusade.

**Effects of the Crusades** While the Crusades ultimately resulted in defeat for Europeans and a Muslim victory, many argue that they successfully extended the reach of Christianity and Western civilization. The Roman Catholic Church experienced an increase in wealth, and the power of the Pope was elevated after the Crusades ended. Trade and transportation also improved throughout Europe as a result of the Crusades. The wars created a constant demand for supplies and transportation, which resulted in ship-building and the manufacturing of various supplies. After the Crusades, there was a heightened interest in travel and learning throughout Europe, which some

historians believe may have paved the way for the Renaissance.

