

CRUSADES

Armed Pilgrimages & Defensive Actions 1095 - 1683

THE NARRATIVE

Crusaders were bloodthirsty, greedy soldiers intent on plundering a peaceful Islamic culture.

The Popes called for unjust crusades against Islam to grab more territory, and are the main reason for Muslim animosity toward the West.

The Crusaders massacred untold numbers of innocent men, women, and children.

THE REALITY

→ Both nobles and commoners went on crusade out of love for God and neighbor...to gain an *indulgence*. Most individuals perished, few returned.

→ The Popes responded to the pleas of the Eastern Orthodox Christians (under attack by Muslim forces), as well as pilgrims suffering on journey to the Holy Land.

→ Atrocities were committed by all, Muslim and Christian, as in nearly all wars. But the numbers--and description--have been exaggerated to only one side.

MANUFACTURED HISTORY

The Crusades were a tiny blip in the memory of Muslim history, until the late 1800s, when Kaiser Wilhelm II visited the dilapidated tomb of Saladin, and refurbished it. His actions, as well as the emerging European empire-building, was crafted into the story of "crusaders" completing the job started in the middle ages.



ST. LOUIS IX
A truly virtuous ruler and Crusader, he governed his kingdom justly, and died while on a second crusade in Egypt. He was seen as the "perfect Crusader."

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI
Contrary to the popular images of the saint as a super hippy, Francis went to Egypt in an attempt to convert the Sultan--even proposing to walk through fire to show the truth of Christ. He embodied both the poor man and the knight.



FREDERICK II
The Holy Roman Emperor, he was seen by some as "the wonder of the world" for his intelligence, skill in languages, and political acumen. But he seemed to care little for his faith. He adopted some aspects of the Muslim lifestyle, including keeping a harem. He was viewed as the "Crusader without faith."

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

To Defend Eastern Christians and Recover the Holy Sites
The call by Popes to defend Christians being attacked on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, as well as aid the Byzantine/Eastern Orthodox from invasion--was a response of love. To help a brother Christian--even to the point of laying down one's life--was seen as a serious command.

From its inception in 622, the Islamic faith spread primarily through force and conquest. Within 100 years, Muslims conquered Egypt, much of the middle east, and swept into Spain.

After initial success in the First Crusade, the Christians only held Jerusalem for 88 years, and the rest of the recovered cities/forts were lost by 1187, after being held less than 200 years.

The 5 Ancient centers of Christianity:

Antioch (Syria)
Alexandria (Egypt)
Constantinople (Turkey)
Jerusalem
Rome



Other Key Facts

- Kings had no standing armies; there was no central command of the forces.
- Crusade-making was expensive, time-consuming, and came at great sacrifice.
- Only the first Crusade was successful.
- Atrocities were committed--as in the killing of Jews in Germany. But never with urging of the Pope. Violence was also done to clergy who protected the Jews.
- 4th Crusade (the sacking of Constantinople) ended with an act condemned by the Pope...and those responsible were excommunicated.
- "Children's Crusade" was simply a movement by deeply pious young people.