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**The Crusades**

Pope Urban II’s call brought a tremendous outpouring of religious feeling and support for the Crusade. According to the Pope, those who died on Crusade were assured of a place in Heaven. With red crosses sewn on their tunics worn over their armor and the battle cry of “God Wills It!” on their lips, knights and commoners were fired by religious zeal and became crusaders.



**The First and Second Crusades**

By early 1097, three armies of knights and people of all classes had gathered outside Constantinople. Most of the Crusaders were French, but Bohemians, Germans, Englishmen, Scots, Italians, and Spaniards came as well. The Crusaders were ill-prepared for war in the First Crusade. Many knew nothing of the geography, climate, or culture of the Holy Land. They had no grand strategy to capture Jerusalem. The nobles argued among themselves and couldn’t agree on a leader. Finally, an army of 12,000 approached Jerusalem. The crusaders besieged the city for over a month. On July 15, 1099, the captured the city.

All in all, the Crusaders had won a narrow strip of land. It stretched about 650 miles from Edessa in the north to Jerusalem in the south. Four feudal crusaders states were carved out of this territory, each ruled by a European noble.

The Crusaders’ states were extremely vulnerable to Muslim counterattack. In 1144, Edessa was reconquered by the Turks. The Second crusade was organized to recapture Edessa. But its armies straggled home in defeat. In 1187, Europeans were shocked to learn that Jerusalem had fallen to the Kurdish warriors and Muslim leader Saladin.

**The Third Crusade**

The third crusade to recapture Jerusalem was led by three of Europe’s most powerful monarchs. They were Philip II of France, German Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, and Richard the Lion Hearted. Philip argued with Richard and went home. Barbarossa drowned on the journey. So, Richard was left to lead the crusades in an attempt to regain the Holy Land from Saladin. Both Richard and Saladin were brilliant warriors. After many battles, the two agreed to a truce in 1192. Jerusalem remained under Muslim control. In return, Saladin promised that unarmed Christian pilgrims could freely visit the city’s holy places.



**The Later Crusades**

In 1204, the Fourth Crusade to capture Jerusalem failed. The knights did not reach the Holy Land. Instead, they ended up looting the city of Constantinople. In the 1200s, four more Crusades to free the Holy Land were unsuccessful. The religious spirit of the first crusade faded, and the search for personal gain grew. In two later crusades, armies marched not to the Holy Land, but to Egypt. The crusaders intended to weaken Muslim forces there before going to the Holy Land. But none of these attempts conquered much land.

**The Children’s Crusade**

The Children’s Crusade took place in 1212. In two different movements, thousands of children set out to conquer Jerusalem. One group in France was led by a 12 year old! An estimated 30, 000 children under 18 years joined in the Crusade. They were armed only with the belief that God would give them Jerusalem. On their march south to the Mediterranean, many died from cold and starvation. The rest drowned at sea or were sold into slavery.



In Germany, Nicholas of Cologne gathered about 20,000 children and young adults. They began marching toward Rome. Thousands died in the cold and treacherous crossing of the Alps. Those who survived the trip to Italy finally did meet the pope. He told them to go home and wait until they were older. About 2,000 returned home to Germany. A few boarded a ship for the Holy Land and were never heard of again.

**A Spanish Crusade**

In Spain, Muslims controlled most of the country until the 1100s. The Reconquista was along effort by the Spanish to drive the Muslims out of Spain. By the late 1400s, the Muslims held only the tiny kingdom of Granada. In 1492, Granada finally fell to the Christian army of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Spanish monarchs.



To unify their country under Christianity and to increase their power, Isabella and Ferdinand made use of the inquisition. This was a court held by the church to suppress heresy. Heretics were people whose religious beliefs differ from the teachings of the church. Many Jews and Muslims in Spain converted to Christianity during the late 1400s. Even so, the inquisitors suspected these Jewish and Muslim converts of heresy. A person suspected of heresy might be questioned for weeks and even tortured. Once suspects confessed, they were burned at the stake. In 1492, the monarchs expelled all practicing Jews and Muslims from Spain.