

## Brief summary on the Crusades

Prior to 1096, the Muslims had spread their faith and seized property beyond their own borders. This included taking Jerusalem in 637 AD, and the construction of the “dome of the rock” in 691 (also rebuilt in 1021 AD).

Beginning in 1096 and lasting for three years, the First **Crusade** involved the march of four armies from Western Europe against Muslims in the Holy Land. ... During the **Crusades**, the Christian forces set up several Latin Christian states while the Muslims fought in retaliation to regain control of the land.

The Byzantines, who were Christian, lost. The Byzantine emperor asked the Christians in Europe to help protect his empire from the Turks. In 1095, Pope Urban II called for a **crusade** against the Muslims to regain control of Jerusalem.

On November 27, 1095, Pope Urban II makes perhaps the most influential speech of the Middle Ages, giving rise to the Crusades by calling all Christians in Europe to war against Muslims in order to reclaim the Holy Land, with a cry of “Deus vult!” or “God wills it!”

The Pope promised absolution and remission of sins for all who died in the service of Christ.

European nobles were tempted by the prospect of increased land holdings and riches to be gained from the conquest. These nobles were responsible for the death of a great many innocents both on the way to and in the Holy Land, absorbing the riches and estates of those they conveniently deemed opponents to their cause. Adding to the death toll was the inexperience and lack of discipline of the Christian peasants against the trained, professional armies of the Muslims. As a result, the Christians

were initially beaten back, and only through sheer force of numbers were they eventually able to triumph.

The “Knights Templars” were the earliest founders of the [military orders](#), having both a Royal commission and a Papal commission were equipped with a heavy cavalry. The name signifies a soldier, who’s ambition was to honor the memory of Solomon's temple.

The memory of the “Knights Templars” evolved into a different kind of society we know as the Free Masons.

Saladin was a Muslim military and political **leader** who as sultan **lead** the Third Crusade. He led the capture of Jerusalem in 1187. The chivalrous relationship between him and the Christian King Richard the Lionheart was historic.

They were eight crusades in number, the first **four crusades** are sometimes called the Principal Crusades. The remaining four are referred to as the Minor Crusades.

Tens of thousands of **people** (both soldiers and civilians) **were killed** in the conquest of Jerusalem. The **Crusaders** themselves suffered; historians estimate that only one in 20 survived to even reach the Holy Land. It is estimated that 1.7 million **people died** in total.

On his journey to discover America, Columbus was trying to find gold. What was the gold needed for? To fund a crusade to take Jerusalem back from the Muslims before the end of the world. A lot of people at the time thought that the apocalypse was coming because of all the signs: the plague, famine, earthquakes and so forth. And it was believed that before the end, Jerusalem had to be back in Christian hands so that Christ could return in judgment.

Columbus actually calculated how many years were left before the end of the world. He seemed to think of his whole voyage as a mission, which was part of this apocalyptic scenario.

He was very much interested in evangelizing. He wrote against the idea that the natives could just be baptized and automatically become Christian. Rather, they really needed to be instructed about the Christian faith before being converted. He wrote to the pope requesting that good priests be sent to provide this instruction and even left money in his will for it.

When the “Knights of Columbus” was founded 130 years ago, their namesake, Christopher Columbus, was a symbol of the idea that there is no contradiction in being a Catholic and an American.