

The Crusade movement began in Europe in 1095 as a response to Christian preaching to regain the Holy City from the “infidel” Moslems. Pope Urban II gave his approval, and the First Crusade was launched in 1096. On July 15, 1099, the Crusaders finally reached Jerusalem, their goal, and proceeded to massacre most of the city’s Moslem and Jewish population. Eventually the Crusaders from various European kingdoms acknowledged Baldwin of Boulogne as Baldwin I, king of Jerusalem, and generations of consolidation of the conquest began.

Political and military occupation gradually deteriorated under Moslem resistance, so that in 1145 the newly elected Pope Eugenius III issued a formal Crusade Encyclical to launch the Second Crusade. This Crusade fell apart in the siege of Damascus and mainly embarrassed St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who had supported it. For the next 40 years, Crusaders who had settled in the Middle East consolidated their rule from enormous castles built in European style. These settlements made up the “Frankish East” of the 12th century. On July 4, 1187, the Franks, under Guy of Lusignan, Raynald of Chatillon and Gerard of Ridefort, were slaughtered by Saladin’s Moslem troops at the infamous battle at the Horns of Hattin (Slide 132). As a result, Jerusalem was lost to Christian forces after 88 years.

Frankish success only came again during the Third Crusade, when, in 1191 and 1192, Richard the Lion-Hearted and Philip II took Acre (biblical Acco), Jaffa (modern-day Tel Aviv), Ascalon (modern-day Ashkelon) and coastal towns of southern Galilee, though Jerusalem eluded them. By 1192 Richard was ill. He struck a treaty with Saladin that guaranteed Christian access to the holy places. The very next year Saladin died.

In 1198 Pope Innocent III issued a new Crusade Encyclical launching the Fourth Crusade. This infamous campaign resulted in the sack of Greek-held Constantinople by Frankish forces. Later, in 1229, during the Sixth Crusade, Frederick II of Germany signed a treaty with the Moslems led by al-Kamil, a treaty that gained for the Franks a strip of land from the coast to Jerusalem and the cities of Nazareth, Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Only the Temple Mount remained in Moslem hands, and Jerusalem was not to be fortified. This state of affairs remained barely stable until 1244, when the Turks retook Jerusalem. Finally, in 1291, after decades of strife, a huge Mameluke army from Egypt overwhelmed the Frankish defenders of Acre. This sounded the death knell for the Crusader presence in the Holy Land.