**Causes of the Crusades**

**Learning Objectives: By the end of today’s lesson, you will be able to identify and explain several reasons why the Crusades happened, as well as how the Crusades affected Europe and the Middle East.**

The Crusades were a series of wars during the Middle Ages where the Christians of Europe tried to retake control of Jerusalem and the Holy Land from the Muslims. Jerusalem was important to several religions during the Middle Ages. It was important to Jewish people as it was the site of the original temple to God built by King Solomon. It was important to the Muslims because it was where they believe Muhammad ascended to heaven. It was important to Christians as it is where Christ was crucified and rose again. The Crusades were between the armies of Europe, mostly the Holy Roman Empire, and the Arabs that had control of Jerusalem. In the first Crusade, Europe battled the Seljuk Turks. There were around 30,000 soldiers from Europe in the first Crusade, they were made up of Knights, peasants, and other commoners. Some saw the army as a way to get rich and try out their fighting skills, while others saw it as a way into heaven.

The Crusades had economic, social, and political goals as well as religious motives. Muslims controlled Palestine (the Holy Land) and threatened Constantinople. The Byzantine emperor in Constantinople appealed to Christians to stop Muslim attacks. In addition, the pope, Urban II, wanted to reclaim Palestine and reunite Christendom, which had split into Eastern and Western branches in 1054. In addition, kings and the Church both saw the Crusades as an opportunity to get rid of argumentative knights who fought each other. These knights threatened the peace of the kingdoms, as well as Church property. Others who participated in the Crusades were younger sons who, unlike eldest sons, did not stand to inherit their father’s property. They were looking for land and a position in society, or for adventure. In the later Crusades, merchants profited by making cash loans to finance the journey. They also leased their ships for a hefty fee to transport armies over the Mediterranean Sea. In addition, Italian merchants hoped to gain control of key trade routes to Asia from Muslim traders.

1. What were the Crusades?

2. Why were different religions fighting over control of Jerusalem?

3. Who were the main enemies of the European crusaders?

4. Why did the Byzantine emperor want Europeans to go on a crusade?

5. Why did Pope Urban II want Europeans to go on a crusade?

7. In the chart below, there is a list of reasons why the crusades happened. Identify whether each reason is a religious, political, or economic reason in the right side of the chart.

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| --- | --- |
| Reason | Religious, Political or Economic? |
| The desire to take control of Jerusalem away from Muslims. |  |
| The belief that fighting in a crusade would give you forgiveness of sins. |  |
| The chance to travel and make money. |  |
| The desire to defend the Byzantine empire from the Turks. |  |
| The opportunity for younger sons of European nobles to get new land in the Middle East. |  |
| The possibility of opening up new trade routes between Europe and the Middle East. |  |

**Events and Effects of the Crusades**

There were a number of Crusades that took place over the course of 200 years starting in 1095:

**The First Crusade** (1095-1099): The First Crusade was the most successful. At the request of Pope Urban II, armies from Europe drove out the Turks and took control of Jerusalem. They also gained control over a strip of land that became the four “Crusader States”, small kingdoms in the Middle East controlled by European nobles.

**The Third Crusade** (1187-1192): In 1187 Saladin, the sultan of Egypt, recaptured the city of Jerusalem from the Christians. A third Crusade was launched led by Emperor Barbarossa of Germany, King Philip Augustus of France, and King Richard the Lionheart of England. Richard the Lionheart fought Saladin for several years. In the end he could not conquer Jerusalem, but he did win the right for pilgrims to visit the holy city once again.

**The Fourth Crusade** (1202-1204): The Fourth Crusade was formed by Pope Innocent III with the hope of taking back the Holy Land. However, the Crusaders got sidetracked and greedy and ended up conquering and plundering Constantinople instead in 1204 A.D.

**Children's Crusade** (1212): Started by a French child named Stephen of Cloyes and a German kid named Nicholas, tens of thousands of children gathered to march to the Holy Land. This ended in total disaster. None of the children made it to the Holy Land and many were never seen again. They were likely sold into slavery.

The Crusades are an example of the power of the Church during the medieval period. The call to go to the Holy Land encouraged thousands to leave their homes and travel to faraway lands. For those who stayed home, especially women, it meant a chance to manage affairs on the estates or to operate shops and inns. European merchants who lived and traded in the Crusader states expanded trade between Europe and Southwest Asia. The goods imported from

Southwest Asia included spices, fruits, and cloth. This trade with the West benefited both Christians and Muslims.

However, the failure of later Crusades also lessened the power of the pope. The Crusades weakened the feudal nobility and increased the power of kings. Thousands of knights and other participants lost their lives and fortunes. The fall of Constantinople weakened the Byzantine Empire. For Muslims, the intolerance and prejudice displayed by Christians in the Holy Land left behind a legacy of bitterness and hatred. This legacy continues to the present. For Christians and Jews who remained in the Muslim controlled region after the fall of the Crusader states, relations with the Muslim leadership worsened. For Jews in Europe, the Crusades were a time of increased persecution. The Crusades grew out of religious excitement and created great energy throughout Europe. This same energy led to the growth of trade, towns, and universities in medieval Europe.

1. Which pope called for the Crusades to begin? What was the pope’s name?

2. What were the two results of the First Crusade?

3. Which Muslim leader retook control of Jerusalem during the Third Crusade?

4. What happened during the Fourth Crusade?

5. How did the Crusades affect trade between Europe and Asia?

6. How did the Crusades affect the power of the pope, feudal nobles, and the Byzantine Empire?

7. How did the Crusades affect the relationship between Christians, Muslims, and Jews?