

STATION 1

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JERUSALEM

The city of Jerusalem has been a source of admiration and frustration for millions of people around the world since biblical times. Christians, Muslims, and Jewish people all see the city as sacred and holy to their faith. As a result, all three religious groups have warred extensively over Jerusalem, starting with the First Crusade in 1095 and continuing as the source of violence across the Middle East today. While all groups strive to find peace today, the struggle for control of Jerusalem emerged for control of a city that all three groups claim as their own.

Judaism as a faith is several thousand years older than either Christianity or Islam and, as a result, the Jewish faith has the oldest claim to the city. To the Jewish people, Jerusalem was established as the capital of the Jewish nation, Israel, by King David over 3,000 years ago. It was also the location of their First Temple built by David's very powerful son, King Solomon.



An artist's rendering of ancient Jerusalem showing King Solomon's temple.

The city is sacred to Christians since Jesus performed miracles, preached to the poor, was crucified, and rose from the dead here. Today, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre rests over the location in the city where Jesus was crucified. Muslims claim Jerusalem as their own since, according to the holy Qur'an, Muhammad rose to heaven here; the Dome of the Rock is an Islamic shrine that was built on the ground where this is believed to have happened.

Religious violence in the Middle East can be traced back to how followers of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all have a different vision for Jerusalem. While it has been over 800 years since the Crusades came to an end, the city still remains divided into four distinct quarters with the sole purpose of maintaining peace.

STATION 2

LIFE IN JERUSALEM

For much of antiquity, Muslims, Christians, and Jewish people lived together peacefully behind Jerusalem's city walls. The Abbasid dynasty, which had control over the area, permitted travelers to visit their holy sites. Christians traveled to visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where Jesus was crucified, and Muslim pilgrims frequented the Dome of the Rock, the site where Muhammad rose to heaven. However, this all began to change as the borders of the Abbasid dynasty became too large and difficult to maintain. In 935, Abbasid leaders gave authority to an outside group, the Ikhshidid from Egypt, to rule over Jerusalem and surrounding areas. Immediately, relations among the religious groups in the region changed.

In 937, with the city under Ikhshidid control, riots broke out at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the tomb was looted. Thirty years later, the church was assaulted again, and this time the door and the roof were set on fire. In 969, a new dynasty, known as the Fatimids, conquered the area, however



The Church of the Holy Sepulchre today.

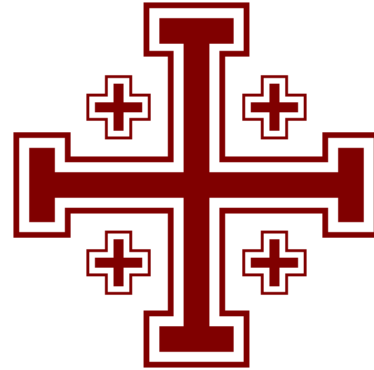
persecution of others continued. Under the reign of Al-Hakim, in 1009, the holy site was completely destroyed down to the foundation. Two years later, Al-Hakim went on a campaign to destroy Jewish synagogues in the area. Reports exist that he went to great lengths to persecute *dhimmi*s (non-Muslims living in Muslim territories); Jewish people were forced to wear wooden blocks around their neck while Christians were forced to wear wooden crosses. After Al-Hakim's rule, persecution eased and, in 1048, new leaders allowed the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to be rebuilt. While there is evidence that Al-Hakim's treatment of others may not have been typical, it is clear that relationships in Jerusalem had changed.

In 1071, a new Muslim empire, expanding from the east, conquered Jerusalem and the surrounding areas. They were called the Seljuks, and like their predecessors, they prohibited safe travel to the sacred sites. Byzantine leaders grew concerned when the Seljuks showed no sign of ending their conquest as they pushed west into Asia Minor; later that year, Byzantine armies lost terribly at Battle of Manzikert, which prompted Byzantine emperor Alexios Komnenos to write a letter, a desperate plea for help, to Pope Urban II.

STATION 3

THE FIRST CRUSADE

In 1095, Pope Urban called a meeting to discuss the state of Jerusalem, Christianity, and the failing Byzantine Empire. This was called the Council of Clermont as it was held in Clermont, France. Urban explained that a crusade would take place to both save the Byzantine Empire and restore safe travel to Jerusalem for traveling Christians. Anyone who went to fight was guaranteed admission into heaven. Serfs, knights, and lords all throughout Europe prepared to leave their manors to follow Urban's commands. Pope Urban's call to repel the invading Seljuks prompted the first of nine total attempts by European Christians to reclaim the holy land. However, it is important to remember that Jerusalem had been controlled by a Muslim dynasties for over 450 years prior to the First Crusade.



Many Crusaders wore a red cross on the First Crusade, like the one shown above. The four smaller crosses are said to symbolize the four books of the Gospel - Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John.

The First Crusade started in November 1095 and, while the size of the Crusader army is hard to know with certainty, historians have estimated that around 30,000-35,000 men heeded Urban's call for war. Each of the soldiers faced a difficult journey. Since Crusaders did not control the ports on the eastern Mediterranean, traveling by water was not an option until they had secured the region. Most marched over 2,000 miles with heavy armor, weapons, and little food or fresh water, as they planned to procure their means of survival on the journey. Crusaders underestimated the length of the expedition and malnourishment plagued the majority of soldiers; with no fresh water, soldiers were forced to drink each other's urine and even the blood of their horses and donkeys. In June of 1099, the weak, sick, and exhausted Christian army finally arrived in the Holy Land.

Under any other circumstances the Christian invaders would have been easily defeated, but by the time they arrived in the region the Seljuk dynasty was plagued with internal dysfunction. The Seljuk leader Malik-Shah died in 1092, just before the Crusades started, and the empire struggled to replace his unifying presence. The Seljuks broke into factions and, what once stood as a staunch, unified force had broken into chaos with little organization. As a result, the Europeans were able to easily surround Jerusalem and breach the city's walls. Upon entering, Crusaders attacked anyone they saw; Muslims and Jewish people were slaughtered in multitudes and left one Crusader to write that the city was "ankle deep in blood." The city now belonged to the Christians.

The Crusaders established four kingdoms in the region to further buffer the city against future invasions: Jerusalem, Antioch, Edessa, and Tripoli. Castles and forts were constructed, however they soon would be overrun, again, by a new Muslim dynasty. The First Crusade was the only one that the Christians would win.

STATION 4

OTHER MAJOR CRUSADES

Following the European victory at the First Crusade, the Christian Crusaders established four permanent settlements to further protect the city. One of those settlements, Edessa, was overrun by the Zengid Dynasty, one of the several small kingdoms that emerged from the disorganized Seljuk Dynasty. Edessa fell to Zengid forces in 1144 and it prompted Pope Eugene III to call for a Second Crusade. Many peasants and knights responded to the call, however unlike the First Crusade, several kings led troops into battle, most notably Louis VII of France and Emperor Conrad II of Germany.

However, this additional leadership would not matter as Christian forces argued repeatedly about decisions along the way, and even in Jerusalem the Christians were split about how to defend the city. The Battle of Hattin showcased just how disorganized the Christians were; after bitter disagreements within the Christian armies, the Crusaders were lured away from a reliable water source where they were exhausted by Muslims forces. The Muslims used their knowledge of the terrain to allow nature to weaken the invading armies. Christians lost the Second Crusade in much the same way they won the first.



This map shows the four kingdoms established by Christians after the First Crusade.

The embarrassing loss at Hattin and the ensuing loss of Jerusalem led to a Third Crusade in 1189. Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa responded by gathering 100,000 men, including over 20,000 knights. However, Barbarossa was swept away in a strong current in the Saleph River before ever reaching Jerusalem; his heavy armor made him unable to swim and much of his army panicked and returned home. Luckily for the Crusaders, a second army led by Richard the Lionheart (Richard I) quickly advanced through Asia Minor and reclaimed many older parts of the Byzantine Empire. Upon reaching Jerusalem, though, Richard and his men came up short and were forced to sign a peace treaty with a rising Muslim leader named Saladin. It was Saladin who defeated the Christians just a few years earlier at Hattin. The deal was simple: Christians would keep the cities they captured in Asia Minor while Muslims maintained control over Jerusalem; however, they Muslims were required to allow safe travel to the city.

STATION 5

THE IMPACT OF THE CRUSADES

Of the Nine Crusades, the First was the only one that ended with Christian control of Jerusalem; from 1147 to 1271, Muslim armies repeatedly outsmarted, outmaneuvered, and flat out beat the invading Christians. However, despite the amount of violence that took place on both sides, the Crusades had a tremendous impact on the medieval world.

In Europe, the Crusades established the Pope and the Catholic Church as the central authority in the eyes of most people. The promise of a glorious afterlife for volunteering to fight gave people hope of life beyond the current. People became consumed with their faith. For example, in 1212 a lesser-known Crusade embarked from Europe composed entirely of children. Led by twelve-year-old Stephen of Cloyes, the 30,000 who enlisted believed Jesus would part waterways and slay their enemies. Unfortunately, most children died in the wilderness only a few miles from home or drowned in the Mediterranean Sea. While this certainly raises a slew of questions, we can learn from this event just how committed Europeans were to their religion.

The political system began to change in Europe as well. Enlisting in the Crusades drew thousands of peasants off the manors and allowed them to experience a new and exciting way of life. This new-found freedom encouraged peasants to settle somewhere else on their way back home; cities offered independence and much greater opportunity for advancement. Naturally, city populations began to rise. At the same time, kings seized land that went unclaimed and their power and influence continued to grow back home.

European economics also changed drastically. Fighting nonstop for almost two-hundred years required a great deal of funds, and Crusaders were often expected to supply their own weapons, armor, and horse. In order to pay for equipment, peasants had to take out loans from

middle and wealthy class merchants. Knights also profited by creating a network of banks to provide equipment to eager pilgrims; this gave rise to the famed Knights Templar, an organization of knights who loaned weapons and armor to peasant Crusaders to ensure they were well-equipped to fight.

In the Holy Land, the impact was somewhat different. Muslim dynasties ruled over Jerusalem for 450 years prior to the First Crusade. When the First Crusade started, the Christian Crusaders were naturally seen as foreigners, aggressors, and invaders. To Muslims, Jerusalem was their homeland and they had every right to remain in the land of their ancestors. Even today a deep anti-Christian, or "anti-West," attitude permeates the region. This is not without warrant, however, since the Catholic Church and European nations launched two-hundred years of war in the region; one could argue that all Muslims did was defend their homeland.

Since Christians were engulfed in a foreign land, it is natural that they learned more about Muslim culture than Muslims learned about them. Christians returned to Europe with knowledge of a new and interesting culture. Crusaders brought back Muslim-ideas such as algebra, chess, and new fabric styles such as muslin. Middle Eastern foods became popular among Europeans as well, such as apricots, coffee, rice, and pepper. Muslims could only learn about Christians from what was brought, which means most of what Muslims learned about Christians is limited to military in nature. One of the greatest impacts that European culture had on the Middle East was the idea of a standing army. Also called a professional army, this is an army where soldiers are paid and are always ready to fight. Today, twenty-three countries lack a professional army, including Costa Rica, Iceland, and Panama.

STATION 6

LIFE IN THE REGION TODAY

The Crusades marked the first major conflict between Christians, Muslims, and Jewish people over the city of Jerusalem and its surrounding areas. Despite being nearly 1,000 years in the past, violence in the region still continues today. Jerusalem is at the center of the conflict today just as it was in 1096 when Pope Urban made his infamous call to war.

The Ottoman Empire controlled the region for over 600 years, from 1299 until its collapse in 1920 following World War I. When the war began in 1914, the Ottoman Empire aligned with Germany and waged war against Great Britain, France, and eventually the United States. To weaken the Ottomans, Britain established bases in Egypt and used it as a hub for a number of attacks. By 1917, Britain wrestled the Holy Lands away from the Ottoman Empire after launching attacks on Palestine, a predominantly Muslim territory that claimed Jerusalem as its capital. It is at this point in recent history where violence in the region sees a dramatic increase.

On November 2, 1917, Great Britain delivered the Balfour Declaration that promised all Jewish people a homeland in the Holy Land. The land that was to be given to the Jewish people would come from Palestine. Over the next two decades, thousands of Jewish people moved to the region and tensions began to escalate. In 1948, following the second World War, Israel was officially created (and supported by Christian western powers such as Britain, France, and the U.S.). Later that year, neighboring Arab nations rejected the recently-created country and invaded Israel; this launched the Arab-Israeli War. After a myriad of violence, the armies of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Saudi

Arabia agreed with Israel on new boundary lines, however history shows the agreement was only temporary.

In 1967, Israeli leaders became furious with Egyptian efforts to close the Straights of Tiran that would negatively harm Israeli citizens; the leaders ordered military airstrikes that destroyed the entire Egyptian Air Force. The conflict lasted six days, resulted in the deaths of nearly 20,000 people, and heightened tensions throughout the region. At the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, Germany, a Palestinian liberation group kidnapped members of the Israeli Olympic team, killing several of them. The following year, Egypt and Syria aligned against Israel in the Yom Kippur War when Egypt launched a surprise attack on the Israeli military; the three-week conflict ended when the United Nations intervened to force a ceasefire. The war resulted in over 50,000 casualties.

Efforts to bring a lasting peace have been unsuccessful. In 1978, U.S. President Jim Carter managed 12-days of secret negotiations between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin; they signed a peace treaty known as the Camp David Accords. Sadat was assassinated by his military for negotiating with Israel. In 1991, the Madrid Peace Conference suggested a two-state solution, a separate Palestinian state and a separate Israeli state. Ultimately, talks failed. In 2000, U.S. President Bill Clinton tried to find peace between the two sides, but talks broke down after two weeks. In recent years, radical Islamist groups such as Hamas and Fatah have launched movements to liberate Palestine through coordinated terrorist attacks.