

# Dossier on Islam and the Crusades

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*These things are impure: urine, excrement, sperm...non-Moslem men and women...and the sweat of an excrement-eating camel.  
~ Ayatollah Khomeini*

*Islam is a religion that expects and demands victory. Unlike Christianity whose central figure died in helplessness and disgrace as a criminal, Islam's prophet died as the dominant political and spiritual conqueror of his society, demanding jihad from his followers. This is the main reason why Islam is at war with the rest of the world, and why it produces individuals such as Usama bin Laden and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.  
~ Richard B. Sorensen*

While the sons of Clovis the Merovingian were ruling over Gaul, a new religion was being formed far to the south in the land of Arabia. This was a harsh land of deserts, barren hills, and nomadic Bedouin tribes who lived amid the desert sands and fought for survival. Muhammad, the founder and prophet of Islam, was born in the town of Mecca around AD 570.

Mecca was the place of a mysterious black stone known as the *Ka'aba*, that had long been revered by the pagan polytheistic Arabs prior to Muhammad. The town's origin was as an oasis in the desert, surrounding a well known as *ZamZam*. This well was reputed to be one of the places where God had provided water for Hagar, who was the maidservant of Abraham's wife Sarah. As told in Genesis, when Sarah was unable to conceive a child she had given Hagar to Abraham as a concubine. Hagar gave birth to Ishmael, and then she taunted Sarah, who became jealous. Later, when Sarah's promised son Isaac was born, Sarah convinced Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away. Hagar almost died in the wilderness, until water was provided for her and her son. Ishmael, who was "a wild ass of a man," became the father of the Arabs, just as his half-brother Isaac was the father of the Jews.

## Muhammad, the Founder of Islam

Muhammad was a descendant of Ishmael from the Quraysh Arabic tribe who lived in Mecca, and at the age of twenty-five he married an older widow whose deceased husband had owned a trading concern. He took over the business, and traveling with caravans to Syria and other places he frequently came into contact with both Jews and Christians. He developed a respect for the "people of the book," and came to learn much about the Bible in conversations with these people.

In 610 when Muhammad was about forty years old, he purportedly saw a vision of the angel Gabriel who commanded him to remember and recite various revelations. Muhammad was illiterate, so he committed these to memory and later had his wife and others memorize these messages as well. They ultimately became the Quran, the Muslim

Scriptures. Over the subsequent years Muhammad received many more revelations supposedly from the angel Gabriel, and his wife and several others accepted him as a prophet. However, after she and her father died in 619, the people of Mecca grew hostile to Muhammad and to his prophetic pretensions in which he condemned some of their practices and threatened their political leadership. Under pressure, Muhammad fled from Mecca in 622 to the oasis of Yathrib, which was later renamed Medina. His journey, known as the *hejira*, is the starting date of the Muslim calendar.

In Medina, Muhammad became a mediator among various Arab tribes. He began allying himself with influential leaders by marrying their daughters; he eventually came to control the markets around Medina and became the most powerful man in the area. Abandoning his trading business, Muhammad created a military raiding party for raiding caravans bound for Mecca and elsewhere, and thus became the warload of Medina.

### **Muhammad and the Jews**

There was a sizable group of Jews in the region of Medina who supported Muhammad in his first years there. Many of the early revelations of Muhammad were pro-Jewish, as he was initially inclined to respect those who read the Bible. But as Muhammad grew in influence, he began to declare himself as a prophet in the Biblical sense. Seeing this, the Medina Jews drew back and did not support him as they had done earlier. Muhammad then began getting new revelations that were critical of and hostile to the Jews. He later directed that prayer should be made toward Mecca instead of Jerusalem, and he changed the day of prayer from Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath and the original Muslim day of prayer, to Friday. Later, in the process of seizing power, he had many of the Medina Jews beheaded.

### **Muslim Theology**

Much of the Quran is a simplified and modified version of the Bible which Muhammad had heard on his caravan travels. For example, there are five Major Prophets of the Quran including Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ (Isa in the Quran), and Muhammad, who is the only significant non-Biblical prophet. Of the twenty-five most important prophets of Islam, all but Muhammad come from the Bible, and include Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, and John the Baptist. But the Bible is rarely, if ever read by Muslims and all prophets other than Muhammad are minimized and eliminated, because of the profession of faith that a Muslim repeats every day, "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his Prophet."

The Arabic word for God is "Allah." Allah is like Jehovah of the Bible in some ways, but is much less personal, and according to the Quran, he is merciful, but also distant, unfeeling and judgmental. The worship of Allah is called "Islam," meaning "submission." The goal of Islam is thus the total submission of each person to the will of Allah.

According to the Quran, Jesus was born of a virgin, was the Messiah that had been promised. He lived a sinless life, performed many miracles, and then ascended into heaven, as the New Testament describes. Muslims also believe that Jesus Christ will

return to the earth at the end of days. But Muhammad either did not understand or could not accept the divinity of Christ and therefore saw him strictly in human terms.

### Islam and Women

Islam has also preserved the view of women that was normative at the time of Muhammad: women were considered to be inferior to men and only half as intelligent.

Muhammad asked some women, "Isn't the witness of a woman equal to half that of a man?" The women said, "Yes." He said, "This is because of the deficiency of the woman's mind."

Hadith 3:286

When Muhammad was speaking to a group of women he said, "I have not met anyone more deficient in intelligence and religion as you."

Hadith 2:541

Polygamy was common in the upper levels of Arab society. Although Muhammad set the limit in the Quran at four wives and an unlimited number of concubines and slave girls, he himself had twelve to fifteen wives over the course of his lifetime as well as many concubines and slave girls; he was married to as many as nine wives at a time. His favorite wife was Aisha, the daughter of Abu-Bakr. Muhammad married her when she was six years old and consummated their marriage when she was nine and he was fifty-three.

### Jihad

Muhammad's transition from trader into warlord led to new Quranic revelations concerning strife, and Muhammad then developed the concept of *jihad*, or holy war. Jihad was to be waged against all who did not believe in Allah or accept the authority of Allah's prophet, i.e., himself, thus justifying all conflict perpetrated by Muslims upon non-Muslims.

If anyone desires a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him.

Surah 3:85

Seize and slay them wherever you find them (non-believers): and in any case, take no friends or helpers from their ranks.

Surah 4:89

Unto all in faith has Allah promised good; but those who strive and fight has He distinguished above all who sit at home by a great reward.

Surah 4:95

For the unbelievers are open enemies to you.

Surah 4:101

But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them, in every stratagem of war.

Surah 9:5

Muhammad said: whoever changes his Islamic religion, kill him.

Hadith 9:57

Muhammad came to see himself more and more as a dictator. Dissent and denial of his role as the prophet of Allah was harshly repressed with persecution and assassination. His forces fought several battles with the inhabitants of Mecca, winning the first, losing the second and ultimately winning the war in AD 630 when the town surrendered to him. He then ruled over both Mecca and Medina, establishing Islam as the local religion. Thus Muhammad became the supreme head of all aspects of his society—governmental, economic, military, and religious.

With the conquest of Mecca completed, Muhammad turned his attention to the expansion of Islam, and indicated that the world was to be divided into two parts, Dar al-Islam, the House of Islam, which consists of the places where Muslims rule, and Dar al-Harb, the House of War, the places where they do not rule. He instructed his followers to practice *jihad*, a perpetual and unending struggle to conquer the entire world and to convert everyone to Islam by force, if necessary, or at least to subjugate and control them. In the Sunnah and Hadiths, other Islamic writings that augment the Quran, many rewards are promised to those who fight for Allah, including seventy-two *houris*, beautiful submissive virgin slave girls, in heaven for each male warrior and martyr. Muhammad said that “Paradise is under the shade of swords.” In our day Ayatollah Khomeini, the ex-leader of Iran, elaborated on the prophet’s words,

Whatever good there is exists thanks to the sword and in the shadow of the sword! People cannot be made obedient except with the sword! The sword is the key to Paradise, which can be opened only for Holy Warriors! Any man or woman who denies the existence of God, or believes in his partners [i.e., in the Trinity], or else does not believe in his prophet Mohammed, is impure in the same way as are excrement and urine.

Islam never had the church vs. state controversies that roiled Europe for centuries and led to the concept of separation of powers embodied in documents such as the American Constitution, where no single person or group can gain ascendancy over everyone else. Also, one of the main blessings of Allah was supposedly military victory, which led to a “might makes right” mentality. Therefore the pattern of one supreme military leader and dictator over all aspects of society persists in virtually all Muslim societies down to the present. When Muslims speak of “purifying society,” this is one of their major objectives.

## The Quran

Muhammad’s revelations continued until the time of his death, but the text of the Quran was fluid, being edited and changed at times by Muhammad himself, not existing in written form, but only in the memories of his followers. They memorized the Quran

under Muhammad's direction and had to memorize all of the revisions as well. The reason that Muhammad gave for revisions to the Quran was that sometimes the original texts did not come to him from the angel Gabriel, but rather from Satan, and these so-called "satanic verses" needed to be expunged from the text. At times Muhammad seemed to be unsure of who and what the source of the revelation was, and at times he was afraid that he himself was possessed by a demon. Furthermore, on at least one occasion he changed the text at the suggestion of others—one of his loyal followers left him after discovering that some of the words of the supposedly divine revelation of Allah had been arbitrarily changed. The Quran's revelations, themes, and tone of writing also changed over time in keeping with Muhammad's political situation, moving from the rebellion and strife characteristic of Muhammad's early years seeking power in Medina, to an authoritarian emphasis on obedience, which was characteristic of the revelations in Muhammad's later years after completing the conquest of Mecca. At that point he was recognized as both prophet and supreme leader, attempting to consolidate his power, and to make everyone submit to his rule.

Thus, there were many versions of the Quran, some of which were gradually written down and others which existed only in the minds of the people who had memorized them. The final selection of what was supposedly the authoritative version was made in AD 650, eighteen years after Muhammad's death, and there were great disagreements over the text after the decision was made. There were twenty-five or so written versions at the time, all differing with each other, and the supporters of these texts as well as people who had memorized all or parts of the Quran engaged in a violent controversy over the version that had been selected. The third ruler after Muhammad unilaterally chose the version he considered to be definitive, and at the same time ordering all of the others to be collected and burned; his version is essentially the one that exists today. Popular discontent led to his assassination in 656, but in spite of this and regardless of the many problems with the text, scholars of Islam teach that the Quran is an exact, word-for-word copy of God's final revelation from tablets that have always existed in heaven.

### **The Caliphs—Successors to Muhammad**

The Prophet Muhammad died two years after the conquest of Mecca in 632. After his death a number of Arab tribes revolted, resulting in a bitter power struggle. A quickly-gathered coalition of leaders declared that Abu-Bakr, the father of Muhammad's favorite wife, was to be designated as the *caliph*, or successor to Muhammad, and the supreme head of the society. He took power and put down all of the rebels; Sunni Muslims since that time consider him as the rightful successor to the prophet, and he was the first of the so-called "rightly guided" leaders. But Muhammad had supposedly designated another man named Ali as his heir, who was unfortunately not in Mecca at the time of Muhammad's death. Some felt that Ali had the religious mantle and should have been chosen as caliph instead. These also believed that the caliph should be a direct relative or descendant of Muhammad, a requirement met by Ali because he was Muhammad's son-in-law, having married the prophet's daughter Fatima. This group became known as the Shi'a 'Ali, the partisans of Ali, and the Shiite Muslims of Iraq and Iran descend from them.

Muhammad's declaration of jihad was immediately implemented; Abu-Bakr first prepared for war against Iraq, but he died two years later in 634 before the fighting actually began.

Omar, the second "rightly guided" caliph, was a military and organizational genius. During his ten-year rule from 634 to 644, Arab armies invaded and conquered the Persian Empire in Iraq, all of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. Omar also provided political and financial organization to this huge and expanding area. He avoided the creation of a central government and allowed conquered populations to retain their language, customs, and even their government and religion as long as they paid tribute. Conquered areas typically were not required to convert to Islam, but they became *dhimmis*, peoples that were totally subservient to their Muslim overlords. Islam was to be preeminent, and strict rules were laid on Christians that forbade the building or the repair of churches. Omar installed local governors and created a system of taxation to funnel the wealth of captive areas back to Mecca and Medina.

After Omar died, some wanted Ali, the heir supposedly designated by Muhammad, to be the successor, but Uthman, a relative of several on the selection committee and an experienced political and military leader, was chosen instead. Uthman was the third so-called "rightly guided" caliph, and he established what became known as the Umayyad Caliphate. He continued the expansion of the empire, taking Libya, the Caucasus, Armenia, and Cyprus, but he was not popular with the people due to the Quran controversy. In 656 he was assassinated after selecting what he considered to be the definitive version of the Quran and destroying all of the variant versions.

Following Uthman's death, Ali was made caliph for a short time—the fourth and the last caliph considered to be "rightly guided" by Muslims. Ali represented the conservative and religious side of Islam which had watched in growing concern as their society had become increasingly secularized and corrupt due to the dramatic expansion in the power and wealth of the government. But the Umayyad bureaucracy, which held all of the positions and levers of power, made it very difficult for Ali to rule, and soon afterward the Umayyad supporters chose their own caliph, whose name was Mu'awiyya. Ali was forced to flee, and was later assassinated by some of his former followers.

Mu'awiyya moved the capital of the Islamic Empire from Arabia to Damascus in Syria and further secularized Islamic rule, turning it into a hereditary monarchy. The earlier caliphs had lived in much the same lifestyle as their people, but Mu'awiyya took on the trappings of wealth and power, which caused bitter opposition and attracted more popular support to the Shiites and away from the Sunnis. Mu'awiyya chose his son Yazid to become caliph after him, provoking even more resentment because previously new leaders had always been chosen by the elders of the people. When Mu'awiyya died in 680, Yazid attacked Husayn, the son and heir of Ali. Husayn was living in Karbala, Iraq, at the time and had with him only a small group of supporters, all of whom were slaughtered. The battle of Karbala was considered to be the critical schism between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. Shiites still mourn and celebrate the martyrdom of Husayn.

However, the Umayyad Caliphate which had been established by Uthman continued, and later rulers expanded the Islamic empire to its farthest extent. Cyprus, Tunisia, and Afghanistan were conquered, and in 691 the Mosque of Omar was built on Temple Mount in Jerusalem as a challenge to Jews and Christians. In 710 the eastern empire was extended to the Indus region in India, and during the period of 705 to 715

Carthage was taken as well as all of northwestern Africa—Mauritania and Morocco. In 711 Muslim armies crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and began to invade Spain using Moorish Berber troops from North Africa, and by 716 Spain had been conquered. They continued their invasion of Europe and entered France, but were defeated in 732 by Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours. Although stopped in France, the Muslims continued to threaten Europe by seizing territory in the Balkans and also in Italy. In 820 the Muslims invaded Sicily and moved into southern Italy; in 846 they attacked Rome and desecrated the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul.

Eventually the spirit and the forces of jihad declined as Islam splintered into ethnic and quasi-religious groups that became competitive with and hostile to each other. The Umayyad (Sunni) Caliphate finally collapsed in 758, and the Abbasid (Shiite) Caliphate became the chief Muslim power; the capital of the empire was moved from Damascus to Baghdad. Expansion slowed and Islamic societies became more focused on peace and prosperity. During the period of 660 to 950, while Europe was racked with instability and wars from the migrations of various barbarian groups, Islamic culture became the wealthiest and most highly developed civilization on earth, having conquered and taken over the wealth of so many societies. At this point they abandoned jihad to focus on ruling the kingdoms they had subjugated.

### **The Mahdi and the Destiny of Islam**

As Muslims expanded from the tiny area they controlled at the death of Muhammad in 632, to the huge empire they conquered over the next hundred years, no one government was powerful enough to rule over all of this territory. The office of *caliph* or successor which originally had been occupied by one man considered to be the supreme head of Islam, became vacant, and since then no one has become sufficiently powerful and influential to unite the entire Muslim world. Contemporary rulers such as Saddam Hussein and Mumamar Qaddafi aspired to this, but were not able to gain the credibility of all Muslim nations.

The Shiites believe that the twelfth-generation leader and descendant from Ali was taken to heaven by Allah or is in hiding on the earth. He is the *Mahdi*, the messiah who will supposedly one day return to the earth and make himself known.

### **The Crusades—European Response to Centuries of Muslim War and Aggression**

Muslim rulers believed that their destiny was to rule the entire world. But this was not to be, as Europe, which had seemed to be weak and in decline, finally began to organize a counterattack. In 1095 after four hundred years of debilitating Islamic aggression and conquests in which Christian North Africa had been wiped out, Spain, Sicily, and southern Italy taken, France invaded, and eastern Europe continually threatened, Pope Urban II in Rome received a request from the Emperor in Constantinople asking for help against the Muslim Turks. Later that year the Pope convened the Council of Clermont in France, where he preached the sermon that was perhaps the most effective speech ever made in all of European history, a call for all Christian countries to unite against their common foe, the Muslims. Other popes and leaders had called for this in the past, but now the time was seemingly right, and Urban

received a huge response. The earlier victory over the Moors in France had proved that Islam was vulnerable, and thousands wanted to take up arms and smash the infidels who had killed and subjugated so many Christians and wreaked such havoc on Christendom. The strength of this passion in Europe is seen by the fact that the crusader fervor lasted for approximately one hundred and seventy-five years, in many fits and starts, from 1095 to 1271.

Another motive for crusading was that Europe at the time was an armed camp. Society had survived and recovered from the raids and movements of the Magyars, the Huns, the Vikings, the Visigoths, and others, and had developed a military mindset in order to survive. Having subdued outside forces, European nobles began to fight among themselves for supremacy. These conflicts, along with the associated raping and pillaging, had ruinous effects on the ordinary people. Religious movements sponsored by the church such as the Peace of God and the Truce of God had sprung up in an attempt to contain and limit the violence. The pope understood that a crusade would therefore be a way of directing these military energies at the Muslims, the true enemy of Christendom, and the general religious fervor of the times made this call irresistible to many. The first crusade was launched with the cry of *Deus le volt!* (God wills it!), the crusaders were given crosses to sew on their clothing, and they were promised indulgences and the remission of sins by the pope. Many nobles mortgaged and sold all that they had to raise the necessary funds for the journey and the fight.

But unlike the Muslim jihad that had spawned the crusades, this was not an attempt to conquer or re-take all of the Muslim lands; rather, it targeted only those areas which were considered to be part of European Christendom. Pope Urban tried to direct the crusader armies to help the Byzantine Emperor in Constantinople, but the goal that really seized the imagination of Europe was the liberation of Jerusalem and the restoration of the places associated with the birth and death of Christ. After Palestine had been conquered by Islamic forces during the rule of the Caliph Omar, Muslims had ignored it, and Jerusalem had become a backwater, but Christian pilgrims had still been allowed to visit the holy sites of the city. However, when the Turks took over they had forbidden Christian pilgrims from traveling to the holy places, and later ambushed and killed many of them, causing much anger and resentment. The crusade leaders understood that the land of Palestine was surrounded by a sea of Muslim-held territory, and that an effective conquest would require a long-term perspective, but most of the people involved did not have the patience for such a war. So the focus came to be set on Jerusalem and wresting control of that city away from the infidels.

The crusades were also different from the Muslim jihad in another very significant way, in that Europe suffered from a serious deficiency which almost led to disaster in the first crusade and ultimately doomed all of the rest of them to failure: there was no central military and political leader who had the respect of everyone and who could command the obedience of all of the troops. Instead, the crusades were a series of popular movements consisting of smaller armies, each led by its own knight, duke or king, each with its own agenda, and who would often set out at their own times and in different directions.

A few of these crusader groups consisted not of armed soldiers but peasants, women, children, and older men who, like everyone else, had been caught up in a desire to undertake a great work for God. Unfortunately, this led to tragic waste of life such as



happened with the People's Crusade of Peter the Hermit, which consisted of up to 100,000 people, most of whom were poorly armed and unfit for traveling and fighting. Virtually all of participants in the People's Crusade were eventually massacred by the Turks. The so-called Children's Crusade of 1212 was even more ill-advised. It was led by a young man who had supposedly seen a vision and believed that the Mediterranean Sea would part for the journey to Palestine, and that the Muslims would throw down their arms and surrender when they got there. The participants in the Children's Crusade were disbursed and captured even before they were able to leave European territory.

### **The First Crusade and the Capture of Jerusalem**

The first crusade was launched in 1096. The largest and most significant army was led by Raymond of Toulouse, who was considered to be the overall leader. Smaller armies were led by others, including Godfrey and Baldwin of Bouillon from Lorraine, who were decedents of the Merovingian kings.

The road taken by the crusader armies first led to Constantinople, the seat of the Roman Empire. The crusaders then ill-advisedly marched across the Anatolian plains of Turkey in the middle of the summer with small supplies of food and water; many men and horses died on the march. But they held on their course and reaching the southern edge of Turkey, they headed for Antioch on the coast.

Antioch had been one of the largest cities of the Roman Empire, and was massively fortified; after a long discussion the crusade leaders decided on a siege, and settled in for a long wait. However that winter was particularly cold, and there was little food to be had because all of the nearby areas had been denuded; consequently hunger, starvation, and disease swept through the ranks. Then it was learned that Turkish Muslim troops from the east were marching to relieve Antioch; the crusaders grew desperate and many deserted and left for home. But one of the leaders managed to bribe a captain on the wall of the city to open the gate, and the crusader forces then quickly took the city. When the Muslim army arrived they found Antioch in Christian hands, but the former besiegers now became the besieged, as the Turks surrounded the city. The situation became more grim as there were even fewer food supplies inside the city. More of the crusaders attempted to desert, and those caught by the Turks were tortured, disemboweled, and beheaded outside the city to further demoralize the Christian forces.

But then a "miracle" occurred: one of their priests had a vision in which he was supposedly told the location of the Holy Lance, the implement which had been used to pierce the side of Christ. The priest led the crusaders to the site that had been revealed to him and they began to dig, but after digging for a day they had found nothing. Finally when they were ready to give up, the priest himself jumped down in the hole, and after a few minutes of additional digging he pulled out a lance head. The crusaders attached a pole to the head and paraded the spear throughout the city. Morale improved dramatically; this was a clear sign that they would be victorious, and they immediately planned an attack against the besieging Turkish forces.

The Muslim army was made up of rival groups, and as the siege had worn on they had begun to fight among themselves. When the crusader army came out of Antioch several days later and assembled against them, the Muslims were surprised at its size, and several of the Turkish groups deserted and rode off. This caused a panic among the rest,

allowing the crusaders to rout them and drive them away, resulting in a seemingly miraculous victory.

The march from Antioch to Jerusalem was fairly easy—the towns and cities were relatively small and the inhabitants gave the crusaders supplies in return for peace. The crusaders finally reached Jerusalem in June, 1099, and immediately tried to attack the city, but the attack was easily repulsed, as the fortifications of Jerusalem were even larger than those of Antioch. Then they received more bad news—in a replay of the potential disaster at Antioch, the Egyptians were raising an army to attack them before they could take Jerusalem, and if they could not capture the city they would be slaughtered outside of its walls.

Just then another miracle occurred: Genoese ships arrived at Jaffa carrying building materials, and crusaders were able to cart the materials to Jerusalem and build siege engines for storming the walls. The heat of the summer was intense, and they were in a desperate hurry to finish and attack before the Egyptians got there. But again they were quieted and motivated by the same priest who had found the lance in Antioch, and on 8 July 1099, the Muslim defenders of Jerusalem watched as the crusader army, now barefoot and dressed as pilgrims, walked around the city to the Mount of Olives where they listened to a sermon from one of their priests.

The actual attack began several days later as the siege engines were rolled up to the walls of Jerusalem. The battle was intense, but now that the crusaders were actually fighting for Jerusalem they were ferocious. Godfrey's soldiers were the first to defeat the defenders arrayed against them, and they quickly entered and opened the city gates allowing the rest of the crusaders to pour in. They killed not only the Muslim soldiers defending the city but also women and children, and did not even spare the Jews who had not participated in the fighting. This left an ugly stain that was long remembered by their Muslim adversaries. Nevertheless, the victory was hailed as one of the greatest in history, and it fired the imagination of thousands back in Europe when they heard how—against all odds—the struggling, fractious, and naïve crusaders had come thousands of miles and had retaken the City of David from the infidel.

The kingship of Jerusalem was first offered to Raymond of Toulouse who had been the most influential leader, but he initially refused, coyly indicating that he would not be king in the city of Christ. The kingship was then offered to Godfrey, whose soldiers had been the first to enter the city. He declined the title of king but accepted the rule of Jerusalem, taking the title “Defender of the Holy Sepulcher.” In time, Godfrey de Bouillon became the symbol of the age, the ideal knight whose deeds were immortalized in story and song. He was selected as one of the “Nine Worthies” who embodied the historic ideals of chivalry, and who also included Hector of Troy, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Joshua, David, Judas Maccabaeus, King Arthur, and Charlemagne. Thus Godfrey de Bouillon, the possible descendant of Judas and Mary Magdalene and heir to the Merovingian and Carolingian dynasties, became the first Christian ruler of Jerusalem.

However, while the larger-than-life Godfrey was being celebrated in Europe, the real one was struggling to hold on to Jerusalem and the gains that the crusaders had made. After the victory of Jerusalem many of the crusaders considered their vows to have been fulfilled, and so they returned home, leaving the area dangerously undermanned. Godfrey himself died a year later and his brother Baldwin took up the kingship of Jerusalem. He attempted to maintain and enlarge the precarious Christian hold on

Palestine, and because the crusader position was always relatively weak he and others continually called on the rest of Europe for support, resulting in the other crusades in subsequent years.

The crusades had a negligible effect on Islam as a whole, and the Muslim response to the crusader victories was initially quite muted. Muslim states eventually came to live peace with the Christians, even forming alliances with them against other Muslim governments. This relative peace continued until the days of Saladin, the Arab war leader who was able to create a Muslim coalition and to renew the spirit of jihad. After being in Christian hands for eighty-eight years, Jerusalem was retaken by the forces of Saladin in 1187. It then remained in Muslim control until it was taken by the Jewish forces during the Six Day War of 1967.