

0. SALADIN - Story Preface
1. A CALL TO LIBERATE
2. CRUSADE BACKGROUND
3. WHY CRUSADE?
4. PETER THE HERMIT
5. SLAUGHTER IN JERUSALEM
6. KINGDOM OF JERUSALEM
- 7. SALADIN**
8. A LOOMING SHOWDOWN
9. PRELUDE TO DISASTER
10. A TRAP IS SET
11. DEATH AT THE HORNS OF HATTIN
12. DEFEAT for GUY DE LUSIGNAN
13. BALIEN of IBELIN
14. A DOOMED DEFENSE
15. A FIGHT TO THE DEATH?
16. THE FALL OF JERUSALEM



Although no-known portraits of Saladin exist, he is celebrated with statues like this one at the Citadel in Damascus, Syria. Photo by Graham van der Wielen. License: [CC BY 2.0](#) Click on the image for a better view. When the Crusaders conquered Jerusalem, the city underwent significant change:

- During the [Early Arab Period](#) (between 638-1099), Jews, Muslims and Christians had lived peacefully together in their own quarters.
- During the [Crusader Period](#) (between 1099-1187), people of those three faiths no longer shared the city's quarters.
- French (the language of the Franks) became the predominant spoken language.
- Latin (the language of the church) became an important written language.

After [Baldwin I's death](#), in 1118, his successors continued to rule the new Kingdom of Jerusalem.

A Second Crusade, to strengthen the borders of the kingdom, [failed miserably](#). The Franks had alienated other Christians in the area, including Greek Orthodox, [Coptic](#) and Armenian Christians. (It didn't help when they referred to other Christians as heretics.)

Muslims, meanwhile, wanted to recapture the territory, including the city of Jerusalem (which is third-holiest in [Islam](#), after Mecca and Medina). A new, ambitious young ruler, [Salah al Din Yusuf Ibn Ayyub](#) - whom we know as Saladin - had risen in the ranks to become a powerful leader.

A [Kurd](#) (not an [Arab](#)) from the [town of Tikrit](#) (the birthplace of Saddam Hussein), Saladin believed God had called him to liberate Palestine.

A charismatic man who did not consider himself better than others, Saladin mixed with his people. He was devoted to the idea of a [holy war](#) as a defense against the Franks. He was also a winning warrior and mounted [successful attacks](#) which further encroached on land held by the Franks.

Arabic primary sources say little of his physical appearance:

Those who knew Saladin say little about his physical appearance: he was small and frail, with a short, neat beard.

*They prefer to speak of his pensive and somewhat melancholy face, which would suddenly light up with a comforting smile that would put anyone talking to him at ease. He was always affable with visitors, insisting that they stay to eat, treating them with full honours, even if they were infidels [a term both sides applied to each other], and satisfying all their requests. (*The Crusades Through Arab Eyes*, page 179.)*

Saladin had another characteristic worth noting:

*In general, one may say that Saladin was as demanding of himself as Nur al-Din [his predecessor] had been, but more lenient with others, although he was even more merciless than his elder when dealing with those who had insulted Islam, be they "heretics" or certain of the Franj [the term Muslims used for the Franks]. (See *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes*, page 180.)*

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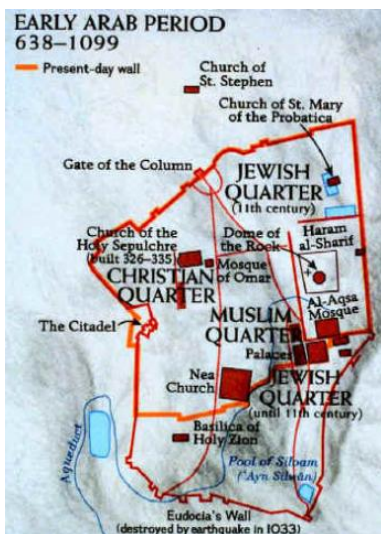


Saladin - Equestrian Statue in Damascus

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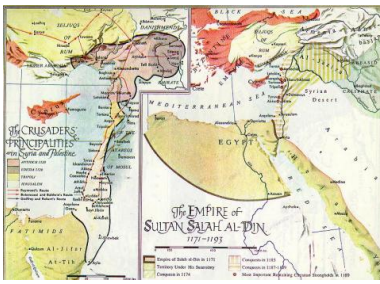


Jerusalem in the Arab Period - Map

Image online, courtesy Professor Ken Pennington, at the Catholic University of America. PD

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Successful Attacks - Map

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