The Mystery Behind the Knights Templar:
Separating Facts from Fiction

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I. The Foundation of the Templar Order
   —> Origins and the beginnings of the Order

II. The Glorious Period of the Order

III. Organization of the Temple
   —> Administrative structure, commanderies and fortresses, hierarchy of the Order

IV. Templar Way of Life
   —> The Temple Rule, Templar equipment, Templar symbols

V. The Brutal Downfall of the Templars
   —> Battle of Hattin and loss of Jerusalem, the fall at Acre, the end of the Order

VI. Myths and ‘Conspiracy’ Theories Around the Knights Templar
   —> Treasure, Ark of the Covenant and Holy Grail, De Molay’s curse, fate of the Templar fleet, Templars in Scotland and America, Switzerland, Templars and Freemasons, Neo-Templar orders, etc.
**BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR (1118-1314)**

1095: Launch of the First Crusade by Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont (France).
1099: Capture of Jerusalem by the Crusaders.
1118: Foundation of the Order of the Temple on the initiative of Hugh of Payns.
1127-1129: Hugh of Payns and a few knights of Christ go to the West to find support from the pope, and Bernard of Clairvaux (very influential abbot and reformer of the Cistercian order, canonized in 1174) writes the letter *De laude novae militiae* (*In Praise of the New Knighthood*) in their favor.
1129: The Rule of the Order is adopted at the Council of Troyes (France).
1139: By the bull *Omne datum optimum*, Pope Innocent II decrees that the Order of the Temple falls directly under the authority of the pope, without going through the civil and religious authorities; the Knights Templar are also tax exempt.
1146-1147: Beginning of the Second Crusade.
1187: Battle of Hattin; victory of Saladin and the Muslim army who then retake Jerusalem; some 230 Templars are beheaded.
1191: During the Third Crusade, the port of Acre (today Akko) becomes the seat of the Templars.
1202-1204: Constantinople is sacked by the Crusaders. Christian relics go to the Templars.
1291: Acre, the last stronghold of the Latin states of the East, falls into the hands of the Muslims. The Grand Master Guillaume de Beaujeu dies in Acre. The Templars settle in Cyprus.
1293: Jacques de Molay becomes Grand Master of the Temple.
1307: On Friday, October 13 at dawn, the Templars are arrested in France on the order of King Philip IV (Philip the Fair).
1308: Under pressure from Pope Clement V, King Edward II arrests the Templars in England.
1310: 54 Knights Templar are burned at the stake in France to force the other Templars to confess.
1312: At the Council of Vienne (France), the Order of the Temple is abolished by the bull *Vox in excelsis*, and its property is transferred to the Hospitallers. This bull forbids any attempt to restore the Order without papal consent.
1314: Jacques de Molay and Geoffroy de Charney retract their confessions and are declared relapse; they are burned at the stake in Paris. Philip the Fair dies in a hunting accident (or as a result of illness), and Pope Clement V also dies of illness the same year.
1319: King Denis of Portugal founds the Order of Christ to welcome the surviving Templars.

**Motto of the Templars**: "Non nobis Domine, non nobis, sed nomine Tuo da gloriam" [Not to us Lord, not to us, but to Your name be the glory, Psalm115-1].

Video "Templar song of the Middle Ages Non nobis domine non nobis": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1vScK8gNRY (Compilation of several video sequences).

**Templar Symbols**

- The Templar cross (cross pattée)
- The “gonfanon beaucent” (flag)
- The Templar seal
Religious Divisions ca.1096

The Crusades were a series of wars between Christians and Muslims over the control of Jerusalem (the "Holy Land") where Jesus had lived and died.
The Crusader States in the Holy Land
Templar Possessions in Europe
Religious Orders in the Holy Land

Holy Sepulchre  Hospitallers  Knights Templar  St. Jack of the Sword  Teutonic Knights

Hugues de Payns (first Grand Master)  Jacques de Molay (last Grand Master)
**AS A CONCLUSION**

“I can easily rank among the plots against a whole society the ordeal of the Knights Templar. This barbarity was even more atrocious because it was committed through the judicial system. This was not at all one of those furies that sudden revenge or the necessity of self-defense might seem to justify; it was a deliberate project to exterminate a whole order which was too proud and too rich. I can well imagine there were young members whose debauched behavior merited some punishment, but I will never believe that a grand master and numerous knights, including princes, all venerable by their age and their services rendered, could be guilty of the absurd and pointless villainies of which they were accused. I will never believe that a whole religious order in Europe could have renounced the Christian religion, for which it fought in Asia, in Africa, and for which many still languished in the chains of the Turks and Arabs, preferring to die in their dungeons than to abjure their religion. Indeed, I can easily believe in more than eighty knights, who, dying, swore to God their innocence. Let us not hesitate to rank their proscription among the grievous effects of a time of ignorance and barbarity.”

Voltaire, *Concerning Conspiracies against Peoples, or Proscriptions*, 1766.

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**SUGGESTED READINGS**

**Scholarly Books**


**Other Books of Interest**