

**The Knights Templar II**

**Lead:** Beginning in 1307, jealousy, envy, desire to appropriate its vast assets and the waning purpose for its existence, brought arrest, torture, trial and eventual dissolution to the Knights Templar.

**Intro.:** *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

**Content:** Born of crisis in the years following the First Crusade, the Knights Templar was also known as the Temple. It was an order of warrior monks assigned to defend the Holy Land from Muslim forces. To finance its military and charitable mission, the Temple took donations of cash and real estate from all over Catholic Europe and the Mediterranean. The Templars even developed a rudimentary form of banking which permitted east-bound pilgrims to deposit funds in, say, Spain and to carry a letter of credit which they could cash when they reached the Holy Land. All this was making the Templars very very rich.

By the time the Temple and other Crusaders were defeated and kicked out of the Holy Land and

**Syria in the 1290s, the Crusading spirit in Europe was on the wane. So too was the justification for Templar existence. Its wealth, secret rituals, undisputed power and presence, and increasingly ill-defined mission, made the order vulnerable to a growing chorus calling for dissolution.**

**One of the Temple's chief critics and debtors was King Philip IV of France. In 1307 Philip and Pope Clement V secretly conspired to take down the order. On Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, 1307, Philip ordered the arrest of all Templars in France. By using torture, brothers were soon manipulated into admitting anything of which they were accused, which sodomy, blasphemy, idolatry, usury. Almost none of it was true. With the death by burning of Jacques de Molay, the last Master of the Temple, the order was dissolved.**

**Most brothers untouched by the roundup and the Temple's vast holdings were transferred to another military order. The Knights Templar thus passed from the scene and into legend, the sort that populates the pages of such fabrications as *The Da Vinci Code*.**

**Research assistance by Alex Hoyt, at the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts**

## Resources

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