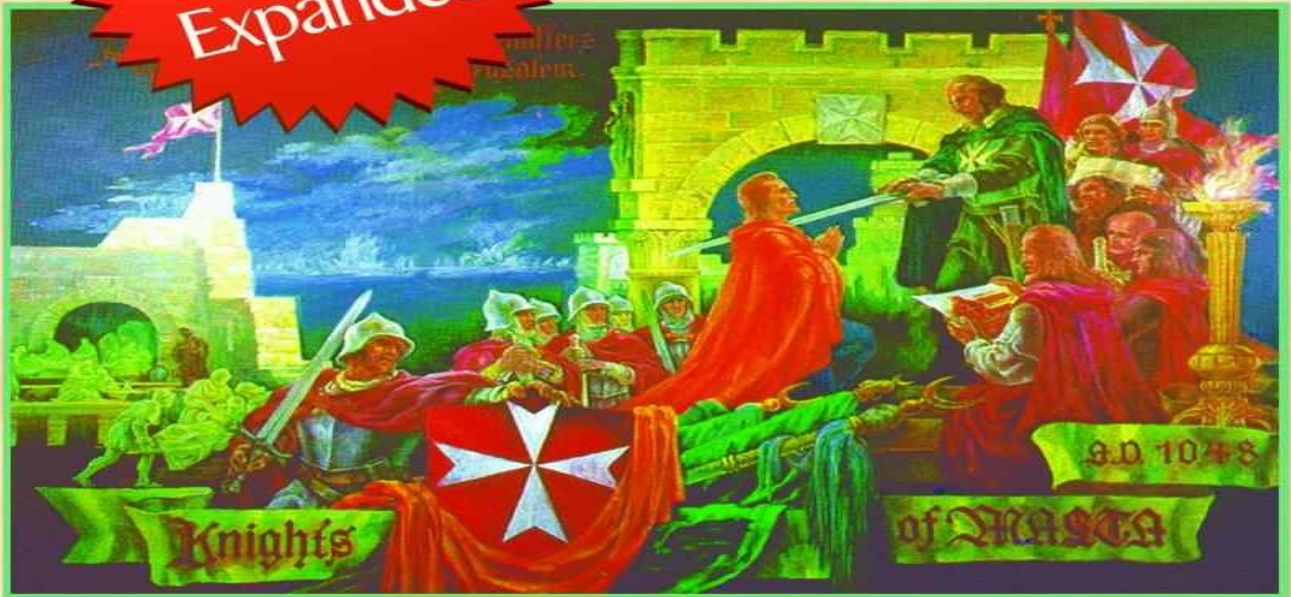


Courage That Changed The World

RICK JOYNER

Updated
and
Expanded



THE EXTRAORDINARY HISTORY OF
THE KNIGHTS OF ST. JOHN

THE HALL OF FAITH SERIES

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Courage That Changed the World

**The History
of the Knights
of St. John**

by Rick Joyner

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CHAPTER ONE

Healing Warriors

The history of the Order of St. John is one of the most remarkable stories of courage, endurance, and prevailing faith since biblical times. Also known as “the Knights of Malta,” three times they took their stand against some of the most powerful Islamic armies in the world. When outnumbered by as many as one hundred to one, they refused to retreat. Given no hope by friends or foes, they stood their ground until they prevailed, to the astonishment of the entire world.

These few but resolute knights endured some of the most terrible sieges and human wave assaults in the history of warfare, but they stood their ground. When most of their fellow knights lay dead all around them, and virtually all who remained were wounded, they stood their ground. They endured continuous bombardments that no one was considered able to survive, some lasting over a month without stopping. When the smoke cleared, the remaining knights appeared standing on the ramparts with their armor gleaming. Then wave after wave of attacks by some of the most feared warriors of all time poured out of their trenches and descended upon them. When the fray was over, the remaining knights appeared with their banner waving over them, ready for the next onslaught.

Even though they were few in number, these courageous knights may have been the greatest military force of all time as victors in possibly the most important and strategic battles in history. It was by their courage and endurance that the seemingly unstoppable hordes of Islam were checked and Europe was saved. Now it seems that history has once again repeated itself. Will there be another band of brothers such as the historic Knights of Malta to once again save the continent?

To this day, the history of these remarkable knights is revered and celebrated. However, before these epic battles, the nations of Europe scorned the Order of St. John as “archaic relics from the past.” Christian rulers denied them supplies or reinforcements, thinking that they did not have a chance against the huge, modern armies of Islam. Even so, they determined to die rather than retreat

before the enemies of the cross. Most would die, but they did not retreat. Their valor earned them unprecedented stature in the history of the courageous, but even more importantly, they turned away what seemed to be the irresistible tide of history. Their lesson is a message to us: The Lord can deliver by many or by few, but it is never too late. It is never time to give up.

Though the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual, there are great and timely lessons in the amazing history of the Order of St. John. Epic spiritual battles such as they fought are now being waged. The odds seem impossible at times, and we are again in need of such great souls to stand for truth, justice, and liberty, without compromise, without fainting, and without regard to the cost. We must now take our stand in our own times against seemingly impossible odds, but if we do not retreat before the enemies of the cross, we too can push back the great darkness of our times.

Against these strongholds of deception and corruption now assaulting every nation and culture, brave knights of the Spirit are being raised up. They are now building their own fortresses on truth, honor, chivalry, and the most important of all, a love for God and His people that will never quit. The great conflict in our own times will take no less courage, endurance, and focused vision than these knights displayed. We would do well to review and take courage from the great history of the Order of St. John.

THE CLASH OF EMPIRES

The battles fought by the Order of St. John were against some of the greatest leaders and most powerful armies of Islam. Islam was founded on the theology of jihad, which is a Holy War to conquer the world for Allah as we see in such texts as Sura 2:190.

War is glorified in Islam. The most esteemed men of this religion are warriors. Then, as it is today, they believed that when the religious leaders proclaimed a conflict to be a jihad, the doors of heaven were opened to anyone who would give their life for the cause. In this way, many have seen Jihad as their opportunity to gain heaven, and they actually hope to die in battle. This made the warriors of Islam some of the most deadly and feared that the world had ever seen, and the source of terror throughout the world in our own time.

There are many faces to Islam just as there are many faces of Christianity. There are Muslims who renounce violent jihad, showing great courage in standing against the extremes of terrorism that now has the world on edge.

Certainly one of the greatest demonstrations of courage by a people were those who voted in Iraq's first free elections. The extremists threatened to kill any who voted and carried out their threat to the degree that they could, bombing and attacking polling stations and those standing in line to vote. Yet they stayed in line and voted, some even having to step over the bodies of their neighbors to do so, but they did. Moderate Muslims may be some of the most truly courageous people today, and we must honor and stand with those of such resolution.

Even so, radical Islamists are the greatest threat to peace and Western civilization in the world today. In the last half-century, jihadists have grown from a small percentage of Muslims to estimates that are now over 30 percent. When we consider that there are now approximately one and a half billion Muslims, this means that close to 500 million are engaged in or support jihad. Their expansion, and the naïveté of the West in understanding and combating this threat, now has even the most courageous moderate Muslims believing that the extremists are destined to win. The jihadists are accomplishing their objectives to a large degree with help from the very ones they have resolved to destroy.

Just as Europe seemed doomed to Islamic conquest in the sixteenth century, Western civilization is being threatened by the same foe. These times cannot be understood without understanding Islam, and especially the rage of radical Islam against the West. This is now the flashpoint of virtually every conflict in the world. Facing almost the same situation that the Order of St. John did in the time of their great stand, we are again in need of those with the courage and endurance of these remarkable knights.

ROOTS OF THE PRESENT CONFLICT

Even in the Middle Ages, Christendom had a different theology about war and warriors than Islam. Peace was holy, and both wars and warriors were considered necessary evils, but evils nonetheless. This put the Christian West at a serious disadvantage for confronting Islam, just as Western civilization is today.

In the Middle Ages, the popes had the authority to change the rules, and they did, sponsoring the Crusades whereby religious adventurers could gain eternal glories for their participation. After the Crusades ended in failure, it was the church's warrior monks like the Order of St. John who took their stand against the conquering armies of Islam to defend Europe. There were other battles and sieges in the Balkans, at Vienna, in Spain, and even outside of Paris. The knights

who were most disregarded as a viable force actually turned the tide and saved Europe.

For almost two centuries, from 1095 to 1291, wave after wave of Christians swept across the Middle East in crusades to recapture the Holy Land. The Crusades were not just the result of a devotion to recover the holy Christian sights, but was a response to over four centuries of attacks on Christians by the forces of Islam. From North Africa through Asia Minor, hundreds of thousands of Christians had been forcibly subjected to Islam, killed, or enslaved. There were accounts of Christians being treated with more tolerance by some Muslim conquerors, but the brutality of others had awakened the Christian world with a resolve to begin their own offensive against Islam.

Few modern politicians understand why politics cannot resolve the Middle East conflicts, but these conflicts are not rooted in politics. They cannot be understood without understanding the theology of those engaged in it. Muslims are commanded to fight against all non-Muslims until the world is subdued and worships Allah by keeping Islamic law. We see this in such passages as Sura 9:5: “But when the forbidden months are past, then fight the pagans (non-Muslims) . . . seize them, and lie in wait for them....” Sura 9:29-30: “Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day . . . nor acknowledge the religion of truth, fight them until they pay the tribute with willing submission....”

The word “Islam” has a double meaning, both “peace” and “submission.” In it the world is divided into the “house of peace,” which is Islam, and the “house of war,” which is every non-Islamic territory. There is peace only for those who have been transferred from the house of war to the house of peace by submission. Jihad is the holy war to bring the world into submission so that the world will then be in the house of peace, or Islam, but there can be no peace until the entire world is subdued by Islam.

“War is hell” and one of the great victories of hell, and in it there will almost always be atrocities. Certainly there were many atrocities on both sides in the conflict between Christendom and Islam. There were also rulers on both sides who treated their foes with dignity and respect. Some Islamic leaders had shown a considerable religious tolerance in the lands under their control and permitted Christians to visit their shrines and to worship freely. The Eastern European Christians had been likewise tolerant of Muslims, even allowing a Muslim quarter and Mosque in Constantinople, one of the great cities of Christendom at

that time.

As the Crusaders laid siege to Jerusalem in 1099, the Muslim governor showed remarkable consideration to his Christian subjects, even allowing them to leave the city to join the Crusaders laying siege to his city. On July 15, when the Christians finally breached the walls and conquered the city, their bloodlust and cruelty was so great that even the most battle hardened who heard of it were appalled. Muslim men, women, and children were slaughtered throughout the city. Even those who had been promised clemency if they stood under the banner of the Christians were surrounded and cut down.

The entire Jewish community of the city was likewise massacred—burned to death in their own synagogue. The mosques, including the Dome of the Rock, were plundered. Whatever code of chivalry or honor that had existed in the conflict until that time was likewise destroyed in a day. For centuries to come, the Christian “victory” in the conquest of Jerusalem would be one of its greatest spiritual defeats and remains a dark cloud hanging over the history of the church.

Certainly there were Christian extremists and terrorists in these dark times. It can be debated whether Christians started the atrocities or just reacted and took this form of warfare to new and diabolical levels, but there is no doubt many Christians were as guilty as the Islamists. Both Christians and Muslims preyed on the weak or vulnerable of the other, profiting from the slave markets of the times where they would sell their captives. Those who lived on the Mediterranean Sea, whether Muslim or Christian, were in constant danger.

THE BIRTH OF THE ORDER OF ST. JOHN

In those dark and trying times, the remarkable story of the Order of St. John began in 1048. At this time, the schism between the Western church, led by the Bishop of Rome, and the Eastern church, led by the Bishop of Constantinople, had not taken place. So when a small but devoted group began serving the sick and wounded Christian pilgrims coming to the holy city, it was with representatives from what would later become the Orthodox and the Catholic churches. Many regarded the Eastern church the dominant influence in Christianity until the schism in 1054.

The founder of this new order was a monk named Brother Gerard, who established two hospices for pilgrims in Jerusalem, one for men and one for women. These are considered to be the very first hospitals—public places for serving the sick and wounded. Brother Gerard dedicated them to St. John the

Baptist. So the Order had its beginning with a devotion to healing, and this remains a devotion of the Order to this day. It is in honor of this heritage that its standard, now called the Maltese Cross, adorns hospitals and ambulances around the world.

Later, the military branch of the Order was established to protect Christian pilgrims who were often attacked by bands of both jihadists and outlaws. The military branch never included more than a few thousand knights, and it was never intended to be a strategic force, but its resolve would force it to become one of the most important strategic forces in history.

Godfrey of Bouillon, the first Christian king of Jerusalem after the Christian conquest, made a gift of land to Brother Gerard's hospices. As the conflict with Islam continued, later rulers of the city made it a custom to give a tenth of their spoils to the Order to be used for the hospitals. Because the plunder was so great, the Order grew fast.

In 1113, Pope Paschal II recognized the servants of these hospitals as an independent Order of the Catholic Church and titled it, The Order of St. John. Though the Order was to become famous for their military exploits, it has never forgotten their first mission, which was to serve the sick and wounded. Thus warfare and healing were combined in one of the most unique orders ever created.

Some accounts recorded that after battles, the knights of St. John would remove their armor and serve the wounded on both sides before taking any rest themselves. To keep their focus on their original commission to serve the sick and wounded, as well as to maintain humility, every knight, including the Grand Master, would spend time regularly serving as an orderly in one of the hospitals. To this day, the Order is often called "the Hospitallers," as they are still regarded internationally for their generosity and service.

THE CONFLICT SPREADS

Until the thirteenth century, most of the conflict between Islam and Christendom had been carried out in the Middle East. The Byzantine Empire headquartered in Constantinople had provided a formidable shield to any Islamic adventures into Christian Europe. To the great consternation of the Pope and Christian kings throughout Europe, the fourth Crusade marched into Constantinople, sacking and destroying it in 1204.

Pope Innocent III condemned the crusaders outright for this outrage against fellow Christians. The attack on Constantinople by the Crusaders proved to be not only one of the most despicable acts in history but also one of the most foolish. The Eastern and Western churches would be divided from that time on, and the shield that Constantinople had provided against Islam was destroyed. This did more to weaken Christian Europe than Islam had accomplished through centuries of attacks by its armies.

The Crusades continued to fall into such debauchery that even their victories horrified Christians, leading to further disintegration and disunity in Christian nations. This opened the door even wider for Islam. The fortunes of Christian armies began to almost universally reverse on the battlefields with Islam after the sacking of Constantinople.

As the Eastern and Western churches divided and fell into quarrels within their own camps, Islam was unifying under brilliant and able leaders. The Order of St. John was also prospering during those times, becoming wealthy from the spoils of the conflict and what they captured by the raiding of Muslim shipping and caravans. They were not exempt from all of the corruption and the politics of the day, but as Christendom was increasingly distracted by the conflicts within, the Knights of St. John did stay unified within their own ranks and focused on the main enemy of Christendom, the powerful Ottoman Empire—the Caliphate of Islam.

Finally, the Crusades ended in defeat and disgrace, but the Ottoman Empire continued to grow stronger. After conquering the Middle East, much of Africa and Eastern Europe, it stood poised to sweep over the rest of Europe. Even with this growing threat, the Christian nations of Europe were becoming so embroiled in political and religious wars with each other that they could not raise a common army to stand against the Ottomans. Soon it appeared that there was nothing that could stop the rising wave of Islam from completing its subjugation of Europe.

The last Christian defenders of Palestine were the knights of St. John in Jerusalem. Keeping their vow to never retreat before the enemies of the cross, the entire garrison died standing their ground in the final battle. The only survivors were a few of the wounded knights who had been carried to ships in the harbor. When they arrived back in Europe, their accounts of the valor with which their brothers had fought galvanized the resolve of the remaining members of the Order based in Europe. Even though Christendom was in retreat

from the Middle East, the knights of St. John determined to return and continue the fight even if they had to do so alone.

CHAPTER TWO

The Battles for Rhodes

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

After a brief period in Cyprus, the Order found a home and place to build a fortress on the small island of Rhodes. Rhodian seamen had been famous for centuries, and they instructed the knights in their nautical skills. The knights learned fast and soon became known as some of the most capable mariners in the world. Rhodes’ situation was precariously right in the middle of the Ottoman shipping lanes through the Aegean, so close that it was within sight of the Ottoman homeland. The knights considered this a convenience more than a danger, and they quickly made themselves odious to the Ottomans with the boldness of their raids.

For the next 150 years, the Knights of St. John were so efficient in their sea war that the Turks were discouraged from even trying to become a great sea power. Their raiding of Ottoman shipping also prevented their planned invasion of Western Europe.

During this period when ships first spotted each other on the sea, not knowing if they were friend or foe while maneuvering to gain an advantage from the wind, they would each hoist different standards to confuse the other. Once battle was eminent, at the last minute they would hoist their real colors. The knights boldly rejected such tactics and painted the hulls of their ships bright red so that the other ships would have no question about who they were.

The Turks then built their pirate fleets and based them along the Barbary Coast, now Libya, Algeria, and Tunis. From there they began attacking Christian shipping, giving part of their spoil to the Sultan.

The knights also worked continually to improve the fortifications at Rhodes. As Europe’s power continued to erode through internal conflicts, the pope’s

renewed call to arms against

Islam fell on deaf ears. At the same time, one of the most brilliant and distinguished leaders of the fifteenth century, Mehmet, was unifying Islam. It seemed with every passing year that the situation increased in favor of the Ottomans.

Mehmet was a cultured man, fluent in a half dozen languages and possessed extensive knowledge in literature and science. He raised the cultural, economic, and military excellence of his people to a level that surpassed Europe at the time. The little Order of St. John was an annoyance to the growing Empire of the Ottomans, but no one considered them to be of any real military threat.

Mehmet was also a conqueror who fashioned himself after Alexander the Great. He laid siege on Constantinople, which was at the time the greatest citadel of Christendom, and subdued the great city in 1453 A.D. Europe then stood before his army like an open treasure chest. Even so, the knights of St. John became so bold and persistent in attacking his supply lines that he could go no further until they were dealt with.

In 1480, Mehmet sent his most able generals and an army of 70,000 men to subdue the 600 knights at Rhodes. The knights mobilized another 1,500 to 2,000 local militia to stand against the massive army of the Ottomans. Christian Europe saw no hope for the Order against such odds and refused to send them reinforcements or supplies. No one expected the siege of Rhodes to be more than a brief sideshow to the coming invasion of Europe. The whole world was about to be proven wrong and would marvel for a long time at what was about to unfold.

THE FIRST BATTLE OF RHODES

Mehmet's army landed with little resistance, and soon his huge siege cannons began to batter the walls that the knights had spent over a century building. Numerous other cannons hurled projectiles over the walls into the city. The Grand Master of the Order was a Frenchman named Pierre d'Aubusson. He was a remarkable leader of men who had with great foresight prepared his knights for the siege he knew would someday come. He built shelters for the townspeople so that they could escape the bombardment. Knowing that they could expect little or no help from Europe, d'Aubusson had gathered abundant provisions, storing them in deep shelters.

After many days of bombardment, in early June the first wave of assault troops attacked the Tower of St. Nicholas, an outlying fortification of the city. Mehmet's troops were repulsed with many casualties to the surprise of both sides. The Ottomans increased their bombardment, hurling over a thousand cannonballs a day into the city for two weeks. The walls soon began to collapse, while the Turks snaked closer and closer with their trenches. At night, fires burned throughout the city from the grenades and incendiaries, so that the knights who fought on the walls by day had to fight fires at night. Those who were present at Rhodes declared that a scene out of hell itself could be no worse. Still the knights refused to surrender.

On June 18, the Turks launched a second major assault by the fearsome Janissaries, renowned as the greatest warriors of the times. Each Janissary had been chosen from age seven because of their physical potential. They had come from Christian nations but had been abducted and made into Islamic warriors. They were trained their entire lives for combat and were forbidden to marry or engage in any kind of family affections in order to focus all of their emotions and energy on battle. They came under the cover of darkness, expecting to find the knights sleeping, but instead they were waiting for them. Swords, arrows, and gunfire filled the night. As the sun arose, it revealed Janissary bodies filling the moats around the tower of St. Nicholas and the knights still standing on the battered walls as their gleaming armor reflected in the sun.

The Ottoman generals had never experienced such a military setback. They resorted to subterfuge to pry the knights from their fortress. They planted agents in the city by having them pretend to be defectors to the Christians. This was not unexpected because many of the Sultan's troops were captives and slaves from Christian nations. These spies were soon able to do great damage to the defenses and create serious and confusing tactical problems for the defenders.

The battle weary knights were now being pressed from within and without. Each day seemed to present a new crisis that threatened to be their doom. The fortifications were crumbling everywhere, but the worst breeches were at the most strategic points. Still they refused to give up. Then the Turks began massing for a final great assault that both sides fully expected to be the end.

The many weeks of constant bombardment had reduced almost the entire city and its walls to huge piles of stone, giving the few remaining defenders little protection. On July 27, the great assault began. The knights and the remaining

militia took their positions and braced for the last battle.

The Sultan sent his bashi-bazouk troops first. These were mercenaries who were considered expendable, and they were expended as wave after wave were cut down by the knights. Their bodies soon filled the ditches and streams making human bridges that led up to the walls. This had in fact been the strategy of Mehmet's generals. The exhausted defenders then watched as huge waves of the fearsome Janissaries arose and began their advance, now even more resolute after their previous humiliation.

The Janissaries overwhelmed the strategic Tower of St. Nicholas that had taken the brunt of the main assault for nearly two months. The knights contested every bit of ground, which the Turks paid dearly for as the ground was soon completely covered with their slain. D'Aubusson, with an arrow in his thigh, led a dozen knights and three standard-bearers up a ladder and onto the wall. There the Grand Master received four more wounds. Then a Janissary "of gigantic structure" hurled a spear right through his breastplate, puncturing his lung. He was dragged back out of the fray just as the enemy made a breach in the defenses and began to pour into the city. It appeared to all that the end of the Knights of St. John had finally come.

In hand-to-hand combat, over burning rubble through choking smoke and fire, in possibly the worst hell that men could create for themselves on the earth, the Turks continued to throw themselves against the remaining knights and militia. Even so, the tenacity of the knights and their ability to inflict casualties soon began to even dismay the Janissaries.

Then, above the smoke and turmoil of this terrible inferno, on a remaining parapet, d'Aubusson's standards suddenly appeared, held by three bearers in shining armor who looked almost like gods from the hell below. The effect on the Janissaries was electrifying. A wave of fear swept through the entire Ottoman army. The remaining bashi began to flee in such terror that fear overcame the Janissaries. Soon the great army of Mehmet began to melt away in confusion, retreating at the very moment when total victory was easily within their grasp.

As the Turks fled, Rhodian sharpshooters made it back up onto the walls and poured a deadly fire into them. The knights then amazingly found enough strength to counterattack, chasing the pride of the Sultan's troops all the way to their base camp. Within ten days, the shattered army fled the island.

The whole world marveled at the knights' victory at Rhodes. The little Order of St. John had not only survived—they had prevailed, defeating the most powerful army in the world. All of Europe celebrated, but the remaining knights immediately began to prepare for what they knew would be an even greater and more determined enemy.

VICTORY SECURED

Throughout Scripture and history, many of the most devastating defeats have come after a great victory because the victors dropped their guard in too much celebration. After seeing their eminent doom turned into such a great victory at Rhodes, the relief and rejoicing must have been very hard to contain for the knights, but they did. They got right back to work repairing their fortress and getting ready for the next battle. Obviously, their extraordinary courage and endurance was also salted with wisdom.

That such a small force could decimate the great army of the seemingly unconquerable Mehmet was viewed as a military miracle of biblical proportion. The Order that had been viewed by Europe as “an archaic relic of the past,” was elevated to a new prominence, some already calling them “the saviors of the continent.” Even so, the surviving knights did not expect their new fame to result in much help from Europe. They were right.

Because of the defeat at Rhodes, the Ottomans were held in check. A Sultan's justification for his position as the leader of Islam was conquest for Islam. With the little garrison of knights standing in his way, Mehmet could do nothing. The knights knew very well how much more odious they now were to the Sultan, and Europe was by no means secure after just one battle. They fully expected Mehmet to send an even greater force, which is exactly what the angry Sultan immediately planned to do.

The knights knew that it would take them a long time to be strong enough to endure another siege. Rebuilding their fortress and their numbers again would take years. The Lord must have heard their prayers. Before the Sultan could prepare his invasion force, he became sick and died. The knights would be given more time to repair the walls and to recruit and train more knights before the next onslaught.

Like the resilient Order itself, d'Aubusson fittingly survived his many wounds. As soon as he had recovered enough to resume command, he began

preparations for the next battle with his characteristic resolve. It was as if he knew that the whole world's destiny had been cast upon his shoulders. All of the money that was received from Europe was devoted to the reconstruction of the walls and towers as well as munitions to be stored for the next siege. As it turned out, the Army of the Crescent would not return to Rhodes for forty years, but it would take every bit of that time for the knights to prepare for what was coming.

D'Aubusson died in 1503, but his vision and leadership ensured that the knights' fortress would grow even stronger than it had been before the first siege. These efforts were not wasted. Certainly the righteous prepare for generations to come, and his efforts did just that, probably saving many nations and generations from Islamic domination.

In 1520, Suleiman "The Magnificent" ascended to the throne of the Ottoman Empire. Like Mehmet, he was a man of culture and learning, as well as a brilliant general. Under his leadership, the empire would ascend to its greatest heights.

One year later, Philippe Villiers de L'Isle-Adam became the Grand Master of the Order of St. John. L'Isle-Adam was likewise an educated aristocrat, as well as an experienced seaman and a devout Christian. He would also prove to be a great military leader. The main players for another one of history's most strategic battles were now in place.

THE SECOND BATTLE OF RHODES

In 1521, the Sultan sent the newly elected Grand Master "A Letter of Victory" in which he boasted of his recent conquests and asked that the Grand Master "rejoice with me over my triumphs." L'Isle-Adam did not waste time trying to be diplomatic and replied that he understood fully the meaning of the letter—that Suleiman intended to make Rhodes his next victory. He was right.

In his next letter, the Sultan demanded that Rhodes be surrendered to him at once. The Sultan's timing was typically brilliant. Henry VIII of England was in the process of seizing the Order's properties in Britain, France and Spain were at war, and Italy was impoverished. Again, the knights could expect no help or reinforcements from Europe. The knights again took their stand to face the most powerful army on earth at the time.

By June 1522, Suleiman was ready for Rhodes. Historians' estimates vary

about the size of the invasion force, but some accounts were that it was as many as 700 ships and 200,000 men. Facing them were about 500 knights and 1,500 militia, making the odds as much as 100 to 1. Neither side expected this invasion to end like the last one, but the knights were resolved to bleed the Ottomans as much as they possibly could in what they expected to be their final battle.

On July 28, the Sultan himself landed on Rhodes with a grand salute, and the battle began. The Turks brought up their huge siege guns, capable of hurling balls nine feet in circumference against the fortifications of the knights, as well as into the city. The fields and hills sprouted a multitude of other cannon and mortars that began a devastating and continuous bombardment. Throughout the month of August, thousands of cannonballs tore into the city and its fortifications each day. The knights answered with their own artillery, much smaller but very effective on the relatively unprotected Turks.

By the end of August, a number of breeches began to appear in the fortress walls. A few days later the first infantry assault came. The knights fought with characteristic resolve, contesting every foot of ground. Even so, the numbers were so overwhelming that the defenders were pushed back until the Turks were able to plant their standards on the wall itself.

This had never happened before, but instead of disheartening the knights, it gave them a new resolve. They rallied and surprised the Turks with a counterattack. The Grand Master himself even entered the fray. After a terrible struggle, the Turks began to fall back. Immediately the Sultan responded by sending a second wave, personally led by Mustafa Pasha, the greatest of the Ottoman generals.

For two more hours the battle raged on the walls. When the assault finally ended, and the smoke cleared, the knights were still standing on the walls. The ground was almost completely covered by Turkish dead and wounded. Miraculously, the knights had lost only three dead along with an unspecified number of militia.

The enraged Sultan then unleashed a continuous bombardment for three straight weeks. On September 24, another massive assault was hurled against the crumbling fortress walls. The bastion of Aragon, one of the city's main fortifications, fell to the now fanatically brave Janissaries. They had borne the humiliation from their previous defeats for more than forty years, and it was like all of their pent-up rage was now being released.

Like Xerxes, Suleiman had a conqueror's throne set on a raised platform so

that he could witness his day of triumph. The tide of battle roared all along the walls of the city as wave after wave poured out of their trenches in what appeared to be an irresistible tide of death.

All day long the battle continued. The knights, gleaming in their armor, always seemed to appear wherever the fighting was the thickest. L'Isle-Adam himself could usually be found with his standard-bearer behind him at the most desperate points of conflict. He was the man the Turks most wanted dead and his standard-bearer seemed to mark him as the special target. Yet those who witnessed the battle said that there was a divine protection around him that the Turks could not penetrate. After one of the bloodiest battles the Ottoman army had experienced, the seemingly invincible attack began to waver, halted, and then became a wholesale retreat.

Knights in their gleaming armor reappeared on the walls as the astonished and outraged Suleiman came down from his elevated throne. He condemned his two most able generals to death, but later he recanted after being persuaded that it would only serve the side of the Christians. The losses for the knights had been great, with two hundred killed and an equal number wounded. Even so, the losses for the Turks were staggering, and their bodies now lay in heaps all around the city. Again, the great siege guns were brought up, and the Sultan poured his deadly fire into the walls and streets of the city for two whole months.

Only about half of the knights remained, and most of them were wounded. It was obvious to all that the army surrounding them was so huge that it would eventually prevail. The knights had withstood the most powerful and determined army on earth for nearly five months without receiving reinforcements or provisions. Still, they held their positions even as weariness was creeping over them like the Turkish trenches creeping closer to them.

As the siege wore on, the Sultan's disposition toward the knights began to change. He respected courage, and he had never witnessed it like the knights had displayed. He also had to be stunned by the decimation of half his army by the knights and could only consider that to continue the battle would mean greater losses. On Christmas Eve, Suleiman made an extraordinary offer of peace with honor to the remaining knights and their militia. He allowed them to leave with their own ships with all of their treasure and all of the people that wanted to go with them. The Sultan even offered the use of his own ships to carry what the knights' vessels could not. Knowing they could not survive even one more

assault, they accepted the Sultan's generous offer.

Suleiman paid tribute to his enemy's courage and endurance. He gave them provisions and his own ships to carry them to the destination of their choice. After meeting with L'Isle-Adam, Suleiman is reported to have said to his Grand Vizier, "It saddens me to be compelled to force this brave old man to leave his home."

Two thousand knights and militia had taken their stand against as many as two hundred thousand, and they had held their ground for more than six months as it seemed that all of hell had poured out its wrath on them. They endured possibly the greatest bombardment and infantry assaults that the world had seen until that time. As the few remaining warriors marched out of their fortress for the last time, the Turks saluted them and the rest of the world would do the same.

Hearing the news that Rhodes had finally fallen, Charles V of France stated, "Nothing in the world was ever so well lost as Rhodes." The prestige of the Order that had already gained the world's respect was raised even further as the details of the siege were spread abroad. No one could have blamed them for just seeking a peaceful place to live out their days, but they immediately began to prepare for the next battle. Their exploits were far from over.

CHAPTER THREE

Malta

“But the greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:11).

For more than two hundred years, the knights had lived in Rhodes and now they had no home. Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, offered a small, relatively inhospitable island in the middle of the Mediterranean named Malta. The knights first rejected it, but then considering its potential as a fortress, they accepted and immediately set about to turn it into one.

Years before, while harbored from a storm on a ship in the harbor of Malta, lightning had struck the sword of L’Isle-Adam, reducing it to ashes. This was later to be considered a providential sign. The knights were to fight another one of history’s most strategic battles on the little island. Again, the Order would display such valor that the very name Malta would be a synonym for courage for generations to come. From that time on, the famous Order of St. John also would be known as “The Knights of Malta.”

With Rhodes in his possession, the Sultan now seemed free to sweep across Europe with little opposition. It must have seemed improbable to anyone living that the battered knights of St. John would again bar his path. Though the Order was severely reduced in both numbers and wealth after their departure from Rhodes, their greatest possessions—courage and endurance—were as great as ever.

Christian Europe continued in disarray from its internal struggles. The Reformation had broken the Roman Church’s domination of Europe. Centuries of resentment toward Rome boiled over into conflict as Christians took up arms against each other across the continent, costing lives and resources that were desperately needed for the looming battle against even greater Islamic armies. Almost every nation in Europe was at war to at least some degree with at least one neighbor, bleeding the continent of its strongest youth.

The Order of St. John was composed of the sons of noblemen from every

Christian nation, but they were able to maintain a remarkable unity in the Order. This may have been because they were so in touch with what they knew to be the greatest threat to their countries, their faith, and their own lives—Islam.

As soon as the knights occupied Malta, they began building fortifications and ships from which they could immediately start to again raid Muslim shipping. The famous Muslim pirate, Barbarossa, had been appointed High Admiral of the Ottoman fleet, and he built their navy into a powerful force. Sea battles began to rage from one end of the Mediterranean to the other. Most of these battles were indecisive, but they kept the world on the edge of its seat. A significant Muslim naval victory could imperil all of Christian Europe.

In 1546, Barbarossa died and Dragut assumed command of his powerful navy. In 1550, the knights were key participants in the defeat of his fleet at Mahdia. For revenge, Dragut attacked and began to lay waste to Malta. Still relatively unfortified, the few defenders put up such a stiff resistance that Dragut abandoned the attack. Even so, both sides knew that he would be back.

In 1557, L'Isle-Adam died and Jean Parisot de La Valette became Grand Master of the Order. Educated and aristocratic, La Valette had once been captured by the Turks and made a galley slave for four years. He was also a young knight during the last siege of Rhodes. He was sixty-three when he became Grand Master, and he would prove to be a great leader like both L'Isle-Adam and d'Aubusson had before him.

Dragut's raid had been beaten back but was a sure sign that the knights had again made themselves odious to the Sultan. Suleiman had now stretched his empire to its greatest limits and was massing for what appeared to be a final assault on Europe. Amazed that the few knights of the Order of St. John were again blocking his way, and knowing that they had to be dealt with but likely at great cost, he set about to finish them off.

At Malta the Order only had five ships, but they were creating great and continuous havoc with Turkish shipping. The whole Muslim world was also now demanding the destruction of the Order of St. John. The Sultan was ambivalent. At times he was enraged at the knights, and at times he feared them, knowing that they could not be defeated without great cost. Public opinion forced his hand, and on May 18, 1565, the Turkish fleet was sighted by the watchman in Fort St. Elmo on the edge of Malta.

The Turkish amphibious fleet that had sailed against them was the largest ever assembled. It appeared as if an entire forest of spars were moving across the

sea. Not until the great Spanish Armada sailed against England would the world see a more powerful fleet. They brought the Sultan's finest Janissaries, tens of thousands of regulars, and over 4,000 Iayalars—religious fanatics who sought death over life. This great horde came to attack 540 knights, 1,000 foot soldiers, and a little over 3,000 Maltese militia. The odds again portended a short and decisive victory for the Ottomans.

The Maltese were described by Roger Crowley in his book, *Empires of the Sea*, as “unflinchingly loyal to Christ's cause, ardent in their Catholic faith, and the Maltese would fight to the last child for their homeland and stony fields.” The Maltese were a remarkable people and fit well with the knights.

As at Rhodes, the knights did not have enough men to even attempt holding the invaders at their beachhead. Unlike Rhodes, where there was only one fortified city, at Malta the knights were spread out over several forts and fortified villages. Military strategists considered this a serious disadvantage, but it did force the Ottomans to diversify their forces. As usual, the Order was determined to take the maximum advantage of every favorable condition and look for any advantage they could find in the unfavorable ones.

The Order's Calvary began to attack and harass the Turkish foraging parties to the point of great distraction to their generals. Then the Turkish High Command, led by the brilliant and capable Mustafa Pasha, made a strategic mistake of concentrating its main attack on the Post of Castile, possibly the strongest point of the knight's defenses.

This was the result of the bravery of a single knight, a Frenchman named Adrien de la Riviere. He had been captured early in the assault. Under torture, de la Riviere had asserted that the Post of Castile was lightly fortified with a small garrison of men and could be easily taken. After a number of assaults were mauled by the Post of Castile's defenders, Pasha realized that he had been lied to. He had the Frenchman beaten to death, but he had already lost hundreds of his fighters, and even more importantly, his troops had already begun to lose their confidence.

ST. ELMO'S FIRE

Then Mustafa Pasha redirected the main part of his force to capturing the small star fort, St. Elmo, which overlooked the Grand Harbor. This diversion

gave la Valette time to make improvements to his other fortifications. Even so, it was apparent that St. Elmo could not hold out for long. The indiscriminate gunfire of the Turk's earlier sieges at Rhodes had now been replaced by mathematical precision and accuracy. Mustafa Pasha turned his main artillery on the fort with unrelenting fire both day and night. Soon the little fort was crumbling.

One night while in his council chamber in Fort St. Angelo, La Valette was disturbed by an unwelcome delegation. A number of knights had slipped out of St. Elmo and made their way to La Valette to tell him that St. Elmo could no longer hold out. La Valette, himself a hero at Rhodes, derided the younger knights as unworthy of their fathers. He told the delegation they need not go back to St. Elmo, but that he would handpick a delegation to relieve them. Under this scorn, the delegation from St. Elmo begged that they be allowed to return to their post, which La Valette finally permitted. As soon as they had departed, the Grand Master told the council that he knew that the little fort was doomed, but they had to buy more time if the rest were to have any chance.

Smoke and fire were rising from St. Elmo, so it appeared as a volcano spewing out of the rock. It seemed impossible that anyone could live in it, but the remaining young knights in the little fort held their ground. Then the famed Dragut arrived with a fresh squadron of ships and more troops. This raised the morale of the entire Turkish force. Dragut also assumed personal command of the forces.

He directed more batteries to pour their deadly fire into St. Elmo, now from three sides. This continued for three entire weeks. Neither the knights nor the Turks who looked on believed that anyone could survive this battering. Then the Janissaries made their assault, confident of a quick victory. To the great surprise of all, they were repulsed with great losses. Shocked and outraged, Dragut responded with a bombardment so heavy that the entire island shook as if by an earthquake.

The next day, Dragut sent a second massive assault against the little fort with the layalars preceding the Janissaries. St. Elmo disappeared under the cloud of dust, smoke, and fire. Hours later when the smoke cleared, the knights on St. Angelo and St. Michaels, as well as the entire Ottoman force, stood in disbelief as they saw the Cross of St. John still flying above the crumbled ruins.

La Valette was so moved, he dispatched a relief force of some of his best fighters to the little fort, but the forces encircling it were too strong and they had

to turn back. The brave little garrison at St. Elmo was abandoned to its own fate.

The next day, if it were possible, Dragut intensified the bombardment of St. Elmo. Now fewer than 100 knights were left in the fort and nearly all of them were wounded. When the bombardment stopped, the imams were heard calling the faithful to either conquer or die for Islam. Wave after wave of the best fighters in the Sultan's army threw themselves at the little fort that was now hardly more than a great pile of rubble. The remaining knights moved into the breach. Those who were too weak to stand asked to be carried into the fray so that they could confront the "infidels" one last time while sitting in chairs. They fought until the last man fell, exacting a huge toll on their attackers.

The little fortress that no one believed could hold out more than a day or two had held out for over a month. This had bought the rest of the Order precious time to strengthen their other defenses. Little St. Elmo also deprived the Sultan of thousands of his best fighting men and many of his leaders. His losses included the master gunner, the Aga of the Janissaries, and most importantly, Dragut himself, who was felled by a cannon shot.

As the Muslim standard was finally raised over the ruins of St. Elmo, Dragut realized that his whole strategy had been wrong. The price paid for St. Elmo had been too dear. As he looked up at the larger fort of St. Angelo, whose guns were already pouring a deadly fire into his advancing troops, he cried out, "Allah! If so small a son has cost so much, what price shall we have to pay for so large a father?"

Dragut then had the bodies of the knights who had died so bravely at St. Elmo, decapitated, bound to crosses, and floated them out into the harbor in front of St. Angelo. This was a brazen insult to the religion of the defenders. La Valette also understood that this meant that there would be no quarter given—this was a fight to the death.

In retaliation, La Valette had a number of the Turkish prisoners executed and their bodies hung on the walls. Both sides knew that there could be no turning back, and there would be no terms offered to the Order such as they had received at Rhodes. The knights would prevail on Malta or they would perish.

The bombardments increased as the knights' remaining fortresses were now caught in a deadly crossfire. Intermittently, Dragut would release ground assaults at different points of the defenses, seeking just a single breach. Each one turned into a massacre. Dragut finally maneuvered his forces until they encircled La

Valette's own headquarters. He then released such a bombardment on it that the inhabitants of the islands of Syracuse and Catania, 70 and 100 miles away, heard the roar of the guns.

Before the barrage had stopped, Dragut sent a massive assault swarming over the walls. A breach was finally made and Dragut poured his troops into it. A mighty struggle raged for six hours until the knights closed the gap and retook the walls. Mortified, Dragut tore his beard and called off the assault. Again, the endurance and tenacity of the knights had been underestimated.

Dragut intensified the bombardment, continuing it for seven more days. Then he released another human wave assault. By now the Order was so reduced in numbers that the breach was made quickly. The knights fought bravely, but they were now simply too outnumbered to stand against so great a tide of raging Turks. Just when the citadel itself was within reach of the Turks, and it appeared that the end of the knights had surely come, to the astonishment of both sides, the Ottoman trumpets rang out calling for retreat!

The defenders could only believe that the continent had finally sent them relief. What in fact happened was that a small force of the Order's cavalry had attacked the Ottoman base camp at Marsa. The little detachment had struck with such ferocity and had raised so much havoc that they were mistaken for a much larger force. Fearing an attack from the rear, Dragut had been forced to call a retreat to his assault troops.

When Dragut finally learned how he had been deceived right at the very moment when victory was within his grasp, his rage knew no bounds. He redoubled artillery and released a continuous day and night bombardment that raged until it seemed improbable that any living thing could survive inside the remaining fortresses.

Inside, a council of knights recommended that a withdrawal be made from all of the outposts into the single fortress of St. Angelo. Grand Master La Valette adamantly refused, citing their vow not to willingly surrender even an acre of ground to the infidels. Military historians would later agree that his tenacity in holding every fortified point probably saved the knights by keeping the Turks from massing at a single point.

La Valette received a dispatch from Don Garcia of Sicily promising to send a relief force of 16,000 men. La Valette was unimpressed. He had received many such promises before, and he did not put his trust in princes. He simply vowed again to fight until victory or death came.

The Turks had not only been pouring their deadly artillery fire into the city over its walls; they had been spending weeks making tunnels under them. On August 18, a mine exploded under the Post of Castile and a great breach was made. The Grand Master himself, now seventy years old, grabbed a light helmet and his sword and rushed out to meet the assault. The knights and the townspeople, encouraged by his example, picked up any weapon that they could find and flung themselves into the breach with him.

La Valette was wounded but refused to retreat. He pointed his sword at the Turkish banners and declared, "Never will I withdraw as long as those banners wave in the wind." Somehow the knights again prevailed and the Turks retreated.

Bitter dissensions began to arise within the ranks of the Turkish High Command. The battle that they thought could take no more than a few days had now lasted months, and there was still no end in sight. Pasha began to calculate how he could get enough supplies from Tripoli, Greece, or Constantinople to keep up the siege through the winter.

Then on September 6, Don Garcia's fleet arrived with 8,000 reinforcements. Even though 8,000 was not a significant number compared to the still huge army of the Turks, their impact on the morale of both sides was much greater than their numbers. If a few hundred knights had cost them so dearly, and they had only captured the little fort of St. Elmo, how could they possibly prevail against so many more? The pride of the mighty Ottoman Empire struck camp and sailed away.

The Sultan's army returned to the Golden Horn with less than one-third of those who had left. Suleiman could not believe that his mighty army had been defeated. He only allowed his fleet to come into the harbor under the cover of darkness so that the people would not see its terrible state. He then remarked, "I now see that it is only in my own hand that my sword is invincible," and he immediately planned to lead another expedition to Malta the following year. Like Mehmet before him, Suleiman would not live to fulfill this vow.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Legacy for the Ages

The great general Dragut, at the head of the most powerful army in the world at the time, had been defeated. Again the world had been astonished at the “archaic relics from the past,” the little Order of St. John. They had stood against the greatest military threat to ever arise against Christian Europe, and in one of the greatest examples of courage and endurance the world had ever seen, they had prevailed again.

Only 250 knights survived at Malta, and most were wounded, maimed, and crippled for life. However, Europe was given a badly needed respite from the threat that had recently appeared so inescapable. In England, where Henry VIII had previously confiscated their property, Queen Elizabeth acknowledged that if Malta had fallen to them, England itself probably would have fallen to Islam. She ordered the Archbishop of Canterbury to appoint a special form of thanksgiving to be read in every church in the land every day for three weeks. The rest of Europe also celebrated, paid their respects, and acknowledged their debt to the Order that most had long before written off as having no real value.

LESSONS FOR TODAY

While the Christian nations of Europe had turned their armies against each other, the knights of St. John never lost sight of who the real enemy was. Even though the Order was composed of the noble sons of those Christian nations that were fighting each other, they never allowed the doctrinal or political divisions to enter their own ranks. Because of their unity, focused vision, and determination never to retreat before the enemies of the cross, they altered what had appeared to be the inevitable course of history. As they had gained respect even from their enemies, it was said that their standard, the famous Maltese Cross, was for a time saluted by every nation in the world and may be the only standard to have ever achieved this.

The Lord is again calling together true knights of the Spirit. There are great

souls today who are likewise standing with uncompromising resolve for the truth of the gospel, for justice, and for the poor and oppressed. Though they too may be from many different nations and denominations, there is a unity in their ranks that cannot be broken. It does not take many if we will stay focused on who the real enemy is and are willing to stand without wavering against the great darkness of our times until it is pushed back. Are you one of them?

We now possibly face an even a greater threat to Christianity from both within and without. Even so, we know from the sure word of prophecy that the victory will be won. The only question is whether we will stand and do our part or let someone else do it and take our crown.

Since history has been recorded, there has been a debate about whether the times make the men or whether men make the times. There is a good case for both, and probably both are true. The times that gave birth to the Order of St. John was one of the darkest times in history, which made true lights shine that much brighter. These knights took their stand because there was no one else to do it, and it was the right thing to do. They never knew when a battle began if they would prevail, live, or die, but they did know that they would never retreat. It was this resolve that brought the ultimate victory.

No great military genius was behind the remarkable victories of the Order of St. John—just courage, endurance, and unyielding, focused resolve. By simply determining to keep their word, a few men of honor went toe to toe with the most powerful armies on earth at the time, and they prevailed. There will be such to arise in these times of increasing darkness, and the light they live by will also prevail in the end.

“Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

“For behold, darkness will cover the earth, and deep darkness the peoples; but the LORD will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you.

“Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising” (Isaiah 60:1-3).

As we read in this, even when the deepest darkness is covering the earth, this is when the glory will be revealed. Regardless of how dark it becomes, we must

never retreat or compromise the truth that we have been entrusted with. Ultimately, the truth will prevail and the nations will come to it.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Continuing History of the Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Rhodes, and Malta

After the Battle of Malta, the Order was held in high esteem among the Christian nations of Europe. In the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, the Ottoman fleet was decisively defeated by the Christian fleet, and the ships of the Order played a crucial role in turning the tide of this battle. A mistake by one of the Christian admirals had opened a gaping hole in their line that the Ottoman fleet was quick to see and attack. The few ships of the Order thrust themselves into the gap with such ferocity and resolve that the Turkish attacking force was stopped and what had been close to a defeat then turned into a decisive victory. This kept the esteem for the knights high in the sight of Christian Europe, for a time.

After the Battle of Lepanto, Islam ceased to be a great threat to Europe, and the courageous deeds of the Order were forgotten by the nations they had fought so valiantly to save. Some rulers started to consider the Order a threat to their own sovereignty. Then the Order went through some periods of its own debauchery, crossing the thin line between harassing Ottoman shipping and piracy. Each time a new leader would arise who would bring repentance, restoring their vision of living by the high standards of their vows and chivalry. Even so, the tests that came from the nations they fought so hard to protect would soon prove more daunting than those that came from Islam.

Because the Order was composed mostly of noblemen, it became a special target of the French Revolution, which resolved to destroy the aristocracy. It was during this time that the Order's most valuable properties were confiscated. In 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte, on his way to Egypt, landed on Malta with a large

force. The Order elected to leave Malta rather than to break their vow to take up arms against the forces of another Christian nation, which they still considered France to be.

Napoleon left Malta after a few days carrying priceless treasures aboard his flagship, "L'Orient," which had been seized from the Order. This ship was sunk a short time later by British forces with the treasure on board, and it has never been recovered.

The Order was devastated and homeless by the loss of Malta. It began to fracture as many of the knights felt that Napoleon should have been resisted with all of the zeal with which they had resisted the Turks, considering the French Revolution to be ruthlessly anti-Christian, and many considered Napoleon to be the antichrist.

The few remaining knights of the Order drifted through Europe, seeking a new home and a new purpose. They found both in Russia. A treaty was signed between the Order and Emperor Paul I of Russia, whereby the Czar was recognized as its Royal Protector. Eventually, he was elected Grand Master of the Order, and the order's insignia was officially added to the Czar's Imperial Coat-of-Arms.

At this time, the statutes of the Order were reconstructed to meet the requirements of the new times, which included allowing those who were worthy but from other denominations than Catholic, to be invested as knights. This was done so that Russian noblemen, who were mostly of the Orthodox tradition, could be included in the Order. Also, the succession hereditary knighthood was conferred upon many knights allowing them to pass on the title to their heirs.

A number of the hereditary knights came to the new world and, in 1908, founded an American Grand Priory, which received Legal Charter in 1911. A Grand Priory of Canada was also established in the ecumenical and non-political tradition. The Grand Priory of Canada operates under a charter granted by the Government of Canada. The Sovereign Ecumenical Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Rhodes, and Malta is recognized as the world's oldest, continuing Order of Chivalry.

The Order continues to operate to defend persecuted Christians around the world, to stand against the present threats to the Christian faith, and to serve the poor and needy regardless of their faith through its charities. The present Grand Master of the Order of St. John is H.E. Nicholas Papanicolaou, who has brought about a spiritual renewal of the Order and a significant increase in its missions

and outreach.

Like the nation of Israel, the Order of St. John the Baptist seems to have been uniquely preserved to play a part in the final battle between light and darkness. The church today, and even Western civilization, is no less in jeopardy than it was during the time of the Order's strategic battles. In the same way, the conflicts within the church have weakened her to the point where she is more vulnerable than ever to the enemy without. Even so, the Lord is not constrained to deliver by many or by few. The Lord still has those who are true nobles in spirit, not just title. They are bound together by a common faith that transcends denominational or national differences. They too have vowed not to retreat before the enemies of the cross, or yield a single acre of ground to the enemy. The present Order of St. John continues to maintain this resolve. Will you?

After Napoleon had deposed the knights from their home on Malta, the Pope sent a letter to the Czar expressing his appreciation for him becoming the Sovereign Protector of the Order. This was interpreted as his approval and acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the Order's new ecumenical direction. It was nearly a half century later when The Roman Catholic Church created the "Sovereign Military Order of Malta," which has at times challenged the legal standing of the Ecumenical Order. As recently as 2011, the U.S. Federal Court decided in favor of the Ecumenical Order on every disputed point.

CHAPTER SIX

The Vows of a Knight

The following are the solemn vows taken by the knights of the Order of St. John in a ceremony that has remained the same for 900 years.

VOWS OF A KNIGHT

Upon the True Faith of a Christian, may God witness that I hereby vow and dedicate myself as a servant of Christ and the Poor, the first qualification of a True Knight.

I promise to be faithful and loyal to Christ and to be guided by the ideals of the Sovereign Order of St John of Jerusalem: to do everything in my power to contribute to its Glory, Protection, Prosperity, Support and Utility: to combat everything prejudicial to its well-being: never to act contrary to its Dignity, but to conduct myself always as a true Knight of Christ: a good Christian and a person of Honor.

Believing that Christ will grant me a special token of His favor, I therefore, in all Humility, Charity, and Respect agree to join with every sincere and Godly Christian of whatever Church, to bring about by prayer and deed the salvation of the Christian World by helping to promote a lasting Christian Unity.

I will adorn my Knighthood with true Charity, the mother and solid foundation of all virtues. I will wear on my person the Christian Maltese Cross of eight points, to constantly remind me of my religious vow of always bearing in my heart the Cross of Jesus Christ, adorned with the virtues that attend it. So help me God.

OTHER FACTS AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORDER

Each knight of the Order of St. John dedicates himself to Christian service and humility. He wears the eight-pointed cross of Malta near his heart to be reminded continually to keep the eight beatitudes of Christ. They receive the title of Chevalier upon being accepted knight.

The Motto Of The Order is: "AS WE ARE UNITED IN CHRIST, WE ARE

UNITED WITH ONE ANOTHER.”

CHAPTER SEVEN

Active Priories of the Ecumenical Order

Grand Priory of Europe:

Prince Anton Esterhazy de Galantha

Grand Priory of Bari and Rome: Giovanni Masi, MD

Grand Priory of the Benelux Countries:

Christian Bouwmann

Grand Priory of Greece: Vice Admiral

Takis Karamanolis

Grand Priory of Malta: Lt. Col. Robert Vella Grand Priory Sweden: Magnus Birke

Grand Priory of Carolinas: Rick Joyner

Grand Priory of Florida: Mark Karydis

Grand Priory of Spain and Portugal:

Count Carlos Luelmo Montero de Alba

Grand Priory of Russia: Admiral Alexander Borodin Grand Priory of Texas:

Archbishop Gregory L. Holley Priory of France: Chevalier Georges Demmer

Priory: of Finland: Hanu Koskinnen

Priory of Rhodes: Lt. General Dimitrios Spyridon Priory of New York: Eugene Rhoddy

Priory of the Rockies: Kay Hiramine

Priory of Arizona: Bonsal Glascock

Priory of Munich: David Pittaway

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The Maltese Cross of the Fire Brigades

(This is the public statement recently made and published by the Federation of Fire Chaplains.)

The Federation of Fire Chaplains has adopted the Maltese cross as the background for their patch and their badge. The reason for this is the Maltese cross is also the badge of the firefighter. The Maltese cross is a symbol of protection, a badge of honor, and its story is hundreds of years old.

When a courageous band of crusaders known as the Knights of St. John fought the Saracens for possession of the Holy Land, they encountered a new weapon unknown to European warriors; it was a simple but horrible device of war. It wrought excruciating pain and agonizing death upon the brave fighters for the cross. The Saracens' weapon was fire.

As the Crusaders advanced on the walls of the city, they were struck by glass bombs containing naphtha. When they became saturated with the highly flammable liquid, the Saracens hurled a flaming torch into their midst. Hundreds of the knights were burned alive. Others risked their lives to save their brothers in arms from dying painful, fiery deaths.

Thus, these men became our first firefighters and the first of a long list of courageous firefighters. Their heroic efforts were recognized by fellow crusaders who awarded each hero a badge of honor, a cross similar to the one firefighters wear today. Since the Knights of St. John lived for close to four centuries on a little island in the Mediterranean Sea named Malta, the cross came to be known as the Maltese cross.

The Maltese cross is a symbol of protection. It means the firefighter who wears this cross is willing to lay down his/her life for you. Just as the Crusaders sacrificed their lives for their fellowman so many years ago, the Maltese cross is a firefighter's badge of honor, signifying they work with courage just a step away from death.

It is an honor for a chaplain to wear the Maltese cross and to serve the

firefighters and rescue persons in their community. The Maltese cross as the background for the chaplain patch is inlaid with the initials of the Federation of Fire Chaplains and Fire Department. In the next inner circle are inlaid two types of universal symbols. On the left the symbol for strength, the oak leaf. On the right the symbol for peace, the olive leaf. The branches of these leaves cross at the bottom of the circle signifying the continued effort of the chaplain to help those they serve to maintain these balances in their life.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Author's Personal History with the OSJ

I first came across the remarkable history of the Order of St. John in 1988 when I met a European businessman who said that he was a Knight of Malta. When I inquired about what a Knight of Malta was, he gave me a book about them and said that membership was exclusive to those who had risked their lives for the sake of the gospel. This got my interest enough to search out more about the Order.

A couple of years later I was dining in Berlin, Germany with a man I had wanted to meet for a long time, Col. Eugene Bird. Col. Bird had been one of the first Americans to enter Berlin after its capture by the Soviets and had later become the American Commandant of the Spandau Prison that housed the Nazi war criminals after the Nuremburg Trial. His studies and writings had become international bestsellers, and he was then known as one of the foremost authorities on Nazi Germany. Knowing his love of history, I began to relate to him the remarkable history of the Knights of Malta that I had recently discovered. He pulled an I.D. card verifying that he was a knight in the Order. He then told me that my writings had been widely read among the knights and that I had been recommended for investiture myself.

I was honored but was not as interested in becoming a member of the Order as I was in finding more knights to talk to about the Order. I was in Germany because I had been shown that the same spiritual forces that had subdued Germany in the 1930s would try to take dominion of my own country, the United States. I was on a quest to understand how Germany had succumbed to such a great evil as the Nazis, and how inroads were, or could be made into my country by the same. I felt that the history of this Order would lead to some of the understanding I was looking for.

Just a few days after leaving Berlin, I met the Austrian nobleman who had recommended me for investiture in the Order. Through him and others I was persuaded that this could be helpful, but I had never become a part of anything

before except the U.S. Navy, including having never even been a part of a denomination. I felt that my faith in Christ gave me inclusion in all that I ever needed—membership in the body of Christ. Even so, this intrigued me, especially as so many very interesting people were knights of the OSJ.

I had also been studying the Moravian movement that gave birth to modern missions, which had also been incubated in Germany. I was touched by how some of their members had crossed the Alps to find members of another movement that had courageously preached the gospel in spite of the great persecution just to get their blessing. The more I studied the Order of St. John, the more I wanted their blessing for the kind of courage and endurance they had in standing against the great darkness of their times. I also wanted the blessing of the Moravians for their devotion to missions and their willingness to sacrifice all for the sake of the gospel.

Over the next six months, it seemed that every prayer meeting I was in, someone would say they saw me being dubbed with a sword as a knight. Then, a prophetic friend, Paul Cain, called to tell me that I was not supposed to go on the trip I was planning. As was typical of Paul's prophetic gift, he told me details that I knew he could not have known unless the Lord had revealed it to him. He then told me that I was about to be given credentials that would help me just as the Apostle Paul's credentials as a Roman citizen had helped him, but they would be controversial. I concluded that it was without question the Lord's will for me to be knighted as a member of the Order of St. John.

My investiture was in Toronto, Canada, and my wife Julie was also invested as a Dame of the Order. I did feel a special impartation at the ceremony. I became friends with the head of the Order, Count Joseph Cumbo, who was a very devout Christian and was seeking to bring a spiritual renewal to the Order. I met others who I thought were doing great exploits for the sake of the faith and became convinced that the Order was kept in existence for some great purpose yet.

Even so, being very occupied with my own ministry I did not have much time to devote to the Order. I tried to attend a few investitures, and brought some of my close friends in, who all seemed likewise encouraged with the impartation. Even so, the greatest encouragement that I had in the first couple of years was meeting a Greek businessman named Nicholas Papanicolaou. I knew immediately that he was an extraordinary leader. I did not know that he would succeed Count Cumbo as Grand Master, but I was very excited when I heard that he did after Cumbo's death.

In the twenty plus years that I have been a member, I have witnessed a great transformation under Nicholas' leadership. Only the most serious Christians who are devoted to the cause of Christ and to the highest principles of the Order are now admitted. This caused great consternation among some, many of whom left the Order under protest that it had become too evangelical. There was also pressure from the Vatican for Catholics to leave the Ecumenical Order that I am a part of. Nicholas, and many Catholic members who were of extraordinary character held fast, keeping their vows to defend Christian unity.

This resulted in a great pruning of the Order that was necessary for its spiritual health. It is now filled with knights and ladies who are resolved to live by the courage and resolve that is the heritage of the Order, to see the gospel of Christ promoted, the poor and the weak served, and persecuted Christians defended. With Nicholas' leadership, it is now becoming a great force for truth once again, and I am honored to be a part of it. As long as there remains a single soul in darkness, our battle is not over.

CHAPTER TEN

Biographies

NICHOLAS PAPANICOLAOU

Nicholas Papanicolaou was born in Athens, Greece. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics from Harvard University and a Master's degree from Columbia University School of Business. He has enjoyed an active business career as a ship owner and former controlling shareholder and chairman of Aston Martin Lagonda Holdings Ltd., U.K.

In 2002, he co-founded with Valdimir Yakunin of Russia and J.C. Kapur of India the World Public Forum, "Dialogue of Civilizations," an NGO registered in Vienna, Austria (www.wpfdc.com). The WPF brings together seven hundred delegates from more than sixty different countries for four days every year on the island of Rhodes in Greece to openly discuss religious and cultural differences. WPF delegates have included the former prime ministers of India, Algeria, the Czech Republic, Austria, the former Presidents of Lithuania, Bangladesh, Khatami of Iran, Slovakia, Armenia, Yemen, President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestine Authority, and many other dignitaries, archbishops of the Orthodox Church, Cardinals, Ayatollah Ali Tashkiri of Iran, Chief Rabbis and Chief Muftis.

Mr. Papanicolaou is the worldwide leader of the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem—The Ecumenical Order, also commonly known as "The Knights of Malta" under the Royal Protection of Prince Enrique de Borbon of Spain, Duke of Sosa. This is a more than 900 year old Christian Order of chivalry that continues to be engaged in Christian missions and worldwide charity. Though known for its decisive battles with Islamic armies in the Middle Ages, and is even credited by some for preventing Islamic dominance of Europe over the last three years, this Order has contributed more than \$60 million in medicines and supplies to needy countries, including those with large Muslim populations such as Pakistan, Indonesia, Liberia, and the Philippines.

The Order is also committed to defending Christian unity, freedom, and persecuted Christians who are discriminated against because of their religion.

Mr. Papanicolaou has been honored with the grand cross of St. Andrew the First Called of Russia for his work on the dialogue of civilizations, the grand cross of Saint John of Jerusalem, the grand cross of the Imperial Spanish Order of Carlos V, and the gold star of the National Rescue Service of the Ukraine, for his humanitarian work.

PRINCE ANTON ESTERHAZY DE GALANTHA

Prince Anton Esterhazy de Galantha is the Lieutenant Grand Master of the Order having assumed that duty in 2006. Prince Esterhazy comes from a distinguished European family who were princes of the Holy Roman Empire as well as the Austrian and Hungarian Empire. His family was elevated to the rank of prince after his direct ancestor, Count Nicholas Esterhazy, heroically opposed the invasion of Hungary and Austria by the Muslim Ottoman Empire in the 17th century.

Prince Esterhazy is now the head of the Esterhazy Family and resides most of the year at Esterhazy Palace in Fertod, Hungary. The palace was taken over by the communists in the aftermath of World War II. Since the fall of communism in Hungary in the early 1990s, Prince Esterhazy has resided in a personal apartment at the palace as a guest of the government. He also resides in Budapest and Brussels.

Each summer Prince Esterhazy hosts the Haydn Festival in Fertod, Hungary since the famous composer was originally supported and sponsored by his ancestors.

LT. GEN. (RET.) W.G. BOYKIN

In 1978, William G. “Jerry” Boykin became one of the first officers of the U.S. Army’s ultra secretive “Delta Force.” He later commanded the Delta Force and fought in some of its most famous battles, including Grenada, where he was wounded, Panama, where the brutal dictator Manuel Noriega surrendered to him, and in Mogadishu in the battle made famous by the book and movie Blackhawk Down, where he was also wounded. His task force helped hunt down the notorious drug lord Pablo Escobar, and he then went on to command all U.S. Special Forces.

He then oversaw covert operations at the Central Intelligence Agency for three years and finished his thirty-six year military career as an Assistant

Secretary of Defense for Intelligence. Often interviewed on national news programs and documentaries, he is also the author of the highly acclaimed books, *Never Surrender*, a autobiography, and the historically inspired action novels *Danger Close*, and *Kiloton Threat*. In 2009, he was invested as a knight in the Order of Saint John, where he now serves as Grand Chancellor.

RICK JOYNER

After his conversion to Christ in 1971 and resolving to be a true disciple, Mr. Joyner was committed to an extensive study of the Christian faith, and especially Christian history. He was engaged in ministry and missions almost immediately, and these have remained his primary focus since. Working as a part-time flight instructor and corporate pilot, in 1980 he founded an air charter service that grew into one of the busiest in the country in just three years. Liquidating that company in 1987 to give himself full-time to the ministry, he founded MorningStar Publications and Ministries. Now the author of more than forty books, many of which have been Christian bestsellers around the world and are published in more than forty languages, MorningStar now oversees hundreds of missions, churches, and schools around the world.

He is the founder of a revolutionary K-12 school, The Comenius School for Creative Leadership, which has achieved top academic results nationally while students only attend school four days a week and have no homework.

He is also the founder and Executive Director of MorningStar University that offers accredited degree programs from Associates through Doctorates. Mr. Joyner also holds a Doctorate of Theology. Invested as a knight in the Order of Saint John in 1993, he now serves as Grand Prior of the Carolinas.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Order of St. John

Priories

1) Grand Priory of Europe:

Prince Anton Esterhazy de Galantha

HSH Chev. Prince Anton

Esterhazy de Galantha GCSJ(H)

info@theknightshospitallers.org

2) Grand Priory of Bari and Interim Grand Prior of Rome: Giovanni Masi, MD

H.E. Chev. Dr. Giovanni Masi Gr.COSJ

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3) Grand Priory of the Benelux Countries: Christian Bouwmann

H.E. Chev. Christianus Bouwman Gr.COSJ

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4) Grand Priory of Greece:

Vice Admiral Takis Karamanolis

H.E. Chev. Adm. Panagiotis Karamanolis CGSJ

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5) Grand Priory of Malta: Lt. Col. Robert Vella H.E. Chev. L. Col. Robert Vella
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6) Grand Priory Sweden: Magnus Birke

H.E. Chev. Magnus Birke COSJ

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7) Grand Priory of Carolinas: Rick Joyner H.E. Chev. Rick Joyner GCSJ
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8) Grand Priory of Florida &
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9) Grand Priory of Spain and Portugal:
Count Carlos Luelmo Montero de Alba H.E. Chev. Count Carlos
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10) Grand Priory of Texas:
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11) Grand Priory of Russia
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12) Priory of France: Georges Demmer
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13) Priory: of Finland: Hannu Koskinen
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14) Priory of Rhodes:
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15) Priory of New York: Eugene Roddy
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16) Priory of the Rockies: Kay Hiramine H.E. Chev. Rev. Dr. Kay Hiramine
Gr.COSJ
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17) Priory of Arizona: Bonsal Glascock
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About the Author



Rick Joyner is the founder and executive director of MorningStar Ministries and Heritage International Ministries and is the Senior Pastor of MorningStar Fellowship Church. He is the author of more than forty books, including *The Final Quest*, *A Prophetic History*, and *Church History*. He is also the president of The Oak Initiative, an interdenominational movement that is mobilizing thousands of Christians to be engaged in the great issues of our times, being the salt and light that they are called to be. Rick and his wife, Julie, have five children: Anna, Aaryn, Amber, Ben, and Sam.





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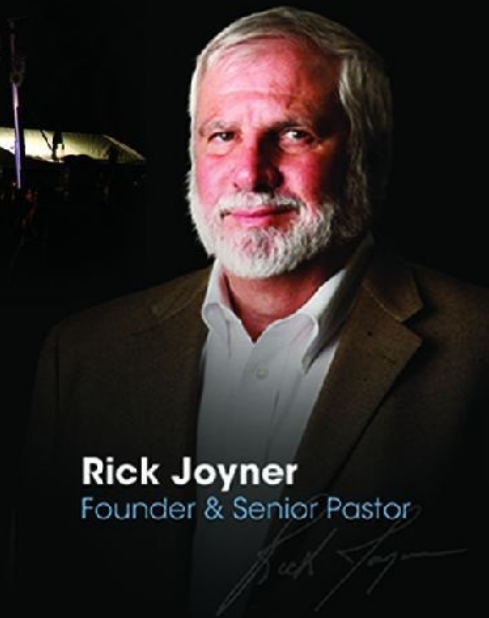
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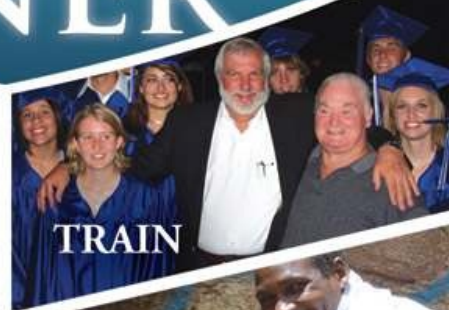


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