

THE CRUSADES: A FIGHT IN THE NAME OF GOD.

Timeline:

- The First Crusade, 1095-1101;
- The Second Crusade, 1145-47;
- The Third Crusade, 1188-92;
- The Fourth Crusade, 1204;
- The Fifth Crusade, 1217;
- The Sixth Crusade, 1228-29, 1239;
- The Seventh Crusade, 1249-52;
- The Eighth Crusade, 1270.

Throughout Anglo-Saxon and Norman times, many people – not just rich kings and bishops - went to the Holy Land on a Pilgrimage, despite the long and dangerous journey – which often took seven or eight years! When the Turks conquered the Middle East this was seen as a major threat to Christians.

[a] Motives for the Crusades.

1095, Pope Urban II.

An accursed race has violently invaded the lands of the Christians. They have destroyed the churches of God or taken them for their own religion. Jerusalem is now held captive by the enemies of Christ, subject to those who do not know God – the worship of the heathen..... He who makes this holy pilgrimage shall wear the sign of the cross of the Lord on his forehead or on his breast..... If you are killed your sins will be pardoned....let those who have been fighting against their own brothers now fight lawfully against the barbarians....

A French crusader writes to his wife, 1098.

My dear wife, I now have twice as much silver, gold and other riches as I had when I set off on this crusade.....

A French crusader writes to his wife, 1190.

Alas, my darling! It breaks my heart to leave you, but I must go to the Holy land. This is where I will win paradise and praise and your true love....

Questions:

- [1] Read the above extracts. Make a list of all the reasons you can find to explain why people went on a Crusade.
- [2] Were the reasons all to do with religion, do you think?
- [3] Can you think of any difficulties facing people on the way to a Crusade?
Find a map of the world in the 12th Century and discover how the Crusader armies would have reached the Holy Land.

[b] Fighting and tactics

Count Stephen of Blois, writing to his wife in 1098.

We had frequent engagements with the Turks, seven battles in which were killed an innumerable quantity of them; they also killed many of our Christian brothers, sending their souls to the joys of heaven. We found Antioch to be enormous beyond belief, and very strong and well-fortified. More than five

thousand bold Turkish soldiers had flocked together within the city. Throughout the whole winter before Antioch we suffered bitter cold and driving rain for Christ our Lord....

Description of tactics used in the siege of Tyre, March 1112.

...the men of Tyre hurled fire close to the wooden tower. The wind fanned the flames and completely burned it out.....

...they made grappling irons to seize the battering ram using ropes to pull it upwards. Sometimes it was broken by means of two stones tied together and thrown down from the city walls. Each ram was about sixty cubits [30 metres] long and suspended from ropes in the wooden tower. At the head of each was a heavy lump of iron....

An English monk writing in 1200 – after the Battle of Hattin

To cut a long story short, so many were killed, so many made prisoner that even the enemy felt sorry for our people. Some of the prisoners were kept safe until Saladin had decided what to do with them. The rest were sent to heaven in a quick and merciful death by the murderous sword. Among the prisoners was Reynald of Chatillon. The tyrant [Saladin] cut off his proud head with his own hands. This was either because he was in a rage, or possibly out of respect for a great man. All the Templars [soldier monks] who were captured, he ordered to be beheaded. He was determined to wipe them out, for he knew they were stronger than him in battle.

An English priest writes about a battle in the third crusade

Ten thousand Saracens suddenly attacked us. They threw javelins and shot arrows, yelling horribly with wild voices. They are terrifying soldiers. Some of our men felt like running away but the bravest remembered that it would be an honour to die for Christ and fought back harder than ever....

Questions

[4] What weapons were used in the fighting?

[5] What usually happened to prisoners? Can you explain why?

[6] All these sources are from the Crusader point of view. Does that influence how we can use them?

[c] Conflicting reports of the Battle of Aleppo.

Ibn al-Qalansi lived in Damascus. He describes the battle of Aleppo, 1119.

Roger, Lord of Antioch marched out of the city with an army of twenty thousand horse and foot soldiers. It was an immense army indeed. The soldiers were well armed. But the Muslims charged down upon them on all sides with blows of swords and hails of arrows. God Most High, to whom be the praise, granted victory to the party of Islam against the infidels.

The Franks were on the ground, horsemen and footsoldiers alike, with their horses and their weapons. Not one of them escaped to tell the tale. Their leader Roger was found stretched out among the dead.

Roger of Antioch's secretary describes the battle of Aleppo, 1119.

Suddenly the flags and standards of the heathens appeared from the mountain sides among the olives. When he saw them, Prince Roger declared, 'Let us serve today as soldiers for God in a successful battle, whether we end up alive or dead.'

Then, at once and all together, a hundred thousand infidel fighting men attacked our army very fiercely. Some of our men (of whom there were said to be seven hundred knights and three thousand foot soldiers) were wounded. Some were killed. Some who were mutilated were put to death on the battlefield. Others were taken captive...

Questions

[7] Draw a table with two columns, like the one below. Compare the two accounts of the Battle of Aleppo. How *similar* are they? How *different*? Can you explain the differences?

	Muslim view	Crusader view
no. of soldiers taking part		
.....		

[d] The capture of Jerusalem.

A chronicler records the Crusaders capture of Jerusalem in 1099.

Entering the city, our pilgrims pursued and killed Saracens up to the temple of Solomon...so that their blood flowed throughout the temple. Finally...our knights seized a great number of men and women, and killed whom they wished...Soon the crusaders ran throughout the city, seizing gold, silver, horses, mules and houses full of all kinds of goods. Then, rejoicing and weeping from extreme joy, our men went to worship our Saviour Jesus....The Saracens who were still alive dragged the dead ones out in front of the gates, and made huge piles of them, as big as houses...

An English priest, writing in 1220, describes the capture of Jerusalem by Saladin in 1187.

Saladin laid siege to the city, and broke into the holy places. A muezzin climbed the high mount of Calvary. There, on the site of the Crucifixion, the cry of a different religion rang out. Another shocking deed was to pull down the cross on the church of the Hospitallers [set up to help pilgrims in Jerusalem.] They smashed it and spat upon it, then dragged it through the city dungheap as an insult to our faith.

Questions

- [8] Why did the Crusaders act the way they did when they captured Jerusalem? Why kill so many Saracens?
- [9] Why did the Saracens act the way they did when they re-captured Jerusalem?
- [10] What do these actions tell us about the attitude of Crusaders to Saracens, and Saracens to Crusaders?