

## The Crusades, Part 1

### The First Crusade

### Introduction

- The word “crusade” comes from the word cross, and speaks of a military endeavor in the name of the cross.
- There are numerous causes of the crusades that will be covered.
- This is a period of Christian history that was romanticized in the West, but indeed it was tragic.
- The First Crusade ends with victory for Western Christendom.
  - But the fracture between East and West will only grow larger.
  - The Crusade also opens the door for two centuries of the Crusader spirit, with many crusades.



## The Crusades in Proper Context

- The crusades stemmed from Christians fighting fire with fire.
  - The Christian world was attacked by the Muslims first.
  - Turkey, North Africa, and the Holy Land all belonged to Christians prior to the Islamic invasions.
  - The Muslims took these Christian lands by the sword through jihad and even tried to take all of Europe to wipe Christianity out. They were stopped at Tours.
- Thus the Christian attacks were a response to the previous Muslim attacks. The forcing of Christian lands to be Muslim was a great offense.
  - Muslims act as if this only can happen one way. When they conquer Christian lands and force them Muslim, it is good, but when the reverse happens, it is unacceptable. They hold to a theological position that they believe justifies this blatant hypocrisy. It is at the root of their animosity toward modern Israel as well.
  - To this day the Islamic world of the Middle East harbors resentment against the West for the Crusades. They still call Western militaries Crusaders when conflict occurs in that part of the world.
  - They still assume the West is Christian, and thus any intervention in that part of the world is framed in an anti-Crusader mindset. But it never occurs to their theologians that they were the founders of the concept of Holy War.



## Causes of the Crusade

- Its original intent was to remove Jerusalem from the hands of the Muslims. Thus, it was a holy war.
  - Jerusalem is the holiest site for Jews and Christians, but is only the 3<sup>rd</sup> holiest site for Muslims.
  - The Dome of the Rock was on the Temple site.
  - Thus, in one sense, the first cause is that the Muslims previously conquered this holy site and the Christians wanted it back.
- Another cause was related to pilgrimages. Every year, people went to the Holy Land to find relics.
  - It was the land that Jesus walked. Therefore, to the West, it made sense that it should be reclaimed for Christ. The East never much cared.
  - Prior to the Seljuk Turks taking control of Palestine in 1055, Christians were able to take pilgrimages as long as they paid taxes. The Muslims had no problem with it.
  - The Turkish rulers, however, treated the Christians badly. They also didn't need the tax money and didn't want them traveling on their land. Christians were distressed and wanted to retake the Land.
  - Also, some of the Turkish rulers were intentionally destroying Christian artifacts.
- Various Popes and European kings talked of such for decades.



## Prerequisites of the Crusades

- The Christians needed a great sea power that could assist the troops going overland by providing provisions, armaments, and troops by sea.
  - When the Normans converted in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century, this became a possibility.
  - They were a fierce warrior group from Scandinavia with many ships. They conquered both Normandy and England.
- A second need was a land power that was closer in proximity to the Muslim lands.
  - Hungary met this need when they converted.
  - They could get the troops closer to the Holy Land without having to fight the enemy too early.
- It's also worth noting that Western Christians believed the defeat of Muslims was achievable.
  - The Spanish began the slow reconquest of Spain from the Moors starting under the reign of King Ferdinand I of Castile (1035-65).
  - Between 1060-1090, the Normans of southern Italy destroyed the Muslim power in Sicily.



## Theology of Christian Violence

- Augustine in the 5<sup>th</sup> century suggested 3 possible Christian approaches to war.
  - Militaristic view – Kill them all and let God sort them out. The OT would often be used.
  - Pacifistic View – Christians are followers of the prince of peace and should not wage war. Christ carried no sword, and He did not encourage us to either. Paul said our warfare is spiritual.
  - Just War Tradition – War should not be entered into for conquest or land and possessions. It should only be entered when it is just, and it is only just when going to war is better than not going to war. If the results for the residents of an area are worse by not going to war than by going to war, then the war is just.
- The Just War is broken into three phases. First is Jus ad Bellum
  - *Just Cause* – There must be a just and proper reason for going to war. Some of the justifiable reasons include self-defense, protecting the innocent (e.g., preventing genocide), restoring human rights wrongly denied, and assisting an ally in their self-defense.
  - *Proportionate Cause* – The good of going to war must outweigh the destruction and death that will be caused by warfare. In other words, going to war must prevent more evil and suffering than it is expected to cause.
  - *Right Intention* – Our reasons and motives for engaging in warfare must be noble and in line with the ethic of Christian love. We can go to war to right a wrong or restore a just peace but not to restore our “national pride” or to seek revenge against an enemy.
  - *Right Authority* – War can only be authorized by a legitimate governing authority. This means it has to be a governing authority we would recognize as fitting the criteria of Romans 13. But it also means that the proper governing authority has actual sovereign authorization to engage in war. For example, the President of the United States has the proper authority to initiate warfare against Canada while the governor of North Dakota does not.
  - *Reasonable Chance of Success* – The initiation of warfare brings violence, pain, and suffering. This cost is only worth paying if it will, as we noted, outweigh the destruction and death that will be caused by warfare. If there is no reasonable chance of success in warfare there can be no reasonable chance of using warfare to restore a just peace.
  - *Last Resort* – Engaging in warfare must be the last reasonable and workable option for addressing problems. Any peaceful alternatives, such as diplomacy or non-violent political pressure, must first be exhausted before going to war.

# Theology of Christian Violence

- Jus in Bello—Two primary criteria.
  - *Discrimination* – This includes two key components, “innocence” and “deliberate attack.” The first rule of just warfare is that we do not target or kill the innocent. In this context, the term innocence refers to individuals unable to cause direct harm to one’s military forces that are engaged in just warfare. Such people are considered “noncombatants” and are immune from attack because they meet the qualification of innocence.
  - *Proportionality* – This is similar to the criterion of “proportionate cause” in deciding to go to war: The good of going to war must outweigh the destruction and death that will be caused by warfare. In other words, going to war must prevent more evil and suffering than it is expected to cause.
- Then there is Jus post Bellum—a lot goes into this one.



# The Background to the Crusades

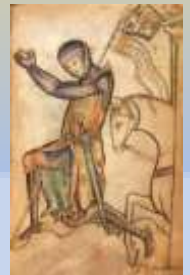


- The Crusades were triggered when the Byzantine Emperor, Alexus Comnenus (1081-1118), asked for the West to help fight the Seljuk Turks.
- The Turks were the new rulers of the Muslim world, and they defeated the Byzantines and conquered most of Asia Minor in 1071.
  - They often made it to the gates of Constantinople.
  - He thought the West would send troops so he could reconquer lost land. Instead, he got the First Crusade.
- At the Synod of Claremont, France in 1095, Pope Urban II (1088-1099) called on the secular powers to begin a Crusade to take back the Holy Land. He had personal motives too.
  - There was a rival Pope, but something like this could unify Christendom behind him. It did exactly that.
  - So he called this council of Western bishops and gave a rousing speech, calling on Catholic Europe to stop fighting each other and to unite by liberating the Holy Land from the Turks.
- Being in France, he appealed to French honor by calling memory to Charlemagne.
  - The crowds responded with an outburst of enthusiasm, chanting *deus vult*, or God wills it.
  - That became the motto of the First Crusade. Only a pope could have accomplished this, which shows the Crusades to be another event that displays the papal influence of this time.



## Christian Knights

- The military power behind the Crusades was the nobility of Western Europe, specifically the knights. They were a warrior class whose main job was to fight.
- The Cluny revivals in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries tried to control and channel their violence in a better way.
  - They developed a moral code called chivalry, which comes from the French word for cavalry.
  - The chivalric values were courage, justice, chastity, sobriety, loyalty, and prudence.
  - In a special ceremony, the church would bless his sword as he made a promise to use his sword to defend churches, women, orphans, the poor, and the servants of God. They also were called upon to fight injustice and the enemies of Christianity.
- It was through chivalry that the Catholic Church attempted to Christianize the knights of western Europe.
- This relates to the Crusades because in freeing the Holy Land from Muslims, they were able to combine two very diverse ideas—fighting and acting as champions of the Christian faith.



## Incentive to Fight

- Before every battle, Crusaders had to confess their sins to a priest and take communion.
- The papacy offered them complete pardon from all the temporal penalties of their sins.
  - This was called an indulgence (I'll teach more about this at a later time).
- In the Second Crusade (1145-1153), Pope Eugenius III (1145-1153) actually promised eternal life to all who fought the Turks in the Holy Land.
- By the time of the Third Crusade, you could be granted an indulgence for all sins by merely hiring a knight to crusade on your behalf.
- From the first crusade to the last, there was always a constant trickle of knights and soldiers heading to the Holy Land.
  - The fighting never really stopped. But there were periods where the West made specific and concentrated attempts at destroying Muslim power.
  - Their would be recruitment and fervor. There would be a massive movement of warriors from Europe to the front.
  - When those escalations happened, historians label those as "Second Crusade," "Third Crusade," etc.



## Prelude to the First Crusade

- Prior to the First Crusade (1096-1099), a pathetic and tragic episode occurred known as the “People’s Crusade.”
- A French monk known as Peter the Hermit (1050-1115) declared that God granted him visions.
  - He preached the idea of a Crusade with much fervor and passion. His popularity suggests he was one of the most popular preachers in the whole Middle Ages.
  - Wherever he preached the Crusade, people wept for their sins, repented, forgave their enemies, restored their marriages, and gave a lot of money to the Church.
- Peter assembled an army of 20,000 regular people; peasants rather than knights. Peter saw little value in weapons, training, or discipline.
- He claimed to see visions of victory over the Muslims in the Holy Land.
  - So he and his ragtag “army” marched to Palestine through southern Germany. Sadly, they massacred Jews on the way. This was the first major outbreak of violent antisemitism in Medieval Europe.
- Well, when this ragtag army crossed the Bosphorus and arrived in Asia Minor, they were massacred by the Turks. An unruly mob of pathetically armed peasants was no match for professional Turkish soldiers.
  - Peter the Hermit escaped the slaughter and was able to return with the victorious Crusading army of knights that captured Jerusalem in 1099.
  - This particular episode is significant because it caused the Turks to believe the Western Christians were no threat. They couldn’t be more wrong.



## The Mustering of the Crusaders

- Unlike Peter’s “soldiers,” the knights of the First Crusade were impressive.
- They were an assembly of Western Europe’s greatest nobles:
  - A son of William the Conqueror (Robert of Normandy)
  - A son of Henry I of France (Hugh of Vermandois)
  - A descendent of Charlemagne (Godfrey of Bouillon)
  - A chaplain (Adhemar, Bishop of Puy—Urban’s official representative)
  - A powerful Norman (Tancred).
- Some of these men exemplified chivalry with excellence; others were not so pure.
- But they knew how to fight, and the Muslims were in for an unpleasant surprise.
- There was one large weakness, however.
  - The Pope did not select a single commander. So there were no coordinated moves. Therefore, the Crusade was hindered by constant quarrelling among the leaders.



## Crusaders in Constantinople

- The Crusading armies gathered at Constantinople in the winter and spring of 1096-1097.
- The force was huge. The estimated range is between 50,000 to 300,000.
  - There were Normans, Franks, Germans, Lombardians, English, and Burgundians.
- The Eastern Emperor was terrified when he saw this force. It was beyond anything he could imagine.
- Western Christendom was vastly more powerful and dangerous than its Eastern counterpart.
  - So the Emperor wanted them to move along quickly.
- The timing of their arrival was serendipitous because the empire of the Seljuk Turks broke up into warring factions.
  - This enabled the Crusaders to defeat the separate Turkish forces one-by-one.



## The First Crusade Begins

- Each commander had to find a way across the Bosphorus to start the fight since there was no unified commander.
- In 1097 they make it from Constantinople to Iconium and their first stop along the way was to Nicaea, the capital of the Seljuk Turks and the gateway across Asia Minor.
- The Turks had their guard down and so the Crusaders took Nicaea without a fight.
  - The Turks regrouped and surround the city. The Crusaders lopped off the heads of some of the citizens and catapulted them out to the Turkish soldiers. This caused them to lose heart.
  - The Turks backed off in order to lure them into an open fight in the plains. The Turks could wait for a pitched battle since the Christians ultimately are headed to Jerusalem.
- By the time the Christians moved on from Nicaea, not even all the Christian forces were across the Bosphorus yet (no unity of effort).
  - Three separate and uncoordinated Christian armies made their way across Turkey.
- The Turks engaged the first army, and at first were winning due to greater numbers. But, then as the battle raged, the second Christian army came over the horizon and engaged. This evened up the battle.
- Well, then came the third wave. The Turks were outnumbered, and they learned the hard way that the Christian warriors were better equipped for battle than any enemy they had previously faced.
- The Turks lost their pitched battle at Dorylaeum, and so the Christians were able to push to Iconium.

## The Seige of Antioch

- From Iconium, they decided they needed to get to Antioch.
- There were two routes—a long one that goes around mountains and a short narrow path through the mountains called the Syrian Gate.
  - The large army decided to take the long route since they would have to go down to single file to get through the narrow Syrian Gate, making them vulnerable.
  - The Turks assumed the Christians would not take the Syrian Gates since only a fool would move an army through it.
  - The Muslim scouts noticed the large army going around the mountains and so they moved their army out of Antioch to meet this threat from the North.
- Unknown to them, a rabble of Christians doing their own thing decided to go through the Syrian Gates.
- Being attacked from different angles, the Turkish force retreated into Antioch, where a grueling eight-month siege ensued.



## Seige of Antioch

- An Armenian Christian that lived in the city opened the gates, and the Christians took the city in June 1098.
- The remaining Turkish defenders took refuge in the citadel.
- Three days later, a large Turkish army showed up and surrounded the city.
- The Christians did not even have the Turks in the citadel beaten, and now they faced total destruction from those outside the city.
- The Christians were running low on food and were starting to doubt the whole idea of a Crusade.





## Victory at Antioch

- For previous campaigns, the Christians could be supplied by Norman ships, but not in Antioch. Things were looking bleak.
- Many chaplains were among them, and one will change the outcome. Peter Bartholomew (a chaplain monk) announced that he had a vision.
  - He claimed that the vision said the lance that pierced Christ's side (i.e, the spear of destiny) was beneath their very feet.
  - For relic hunters this would be great since it would have the blood of Jesus on it.
  - He told them where to dig, and they found an old Roman lance head. Had they dug longer, they probably would have found many of them, but in excitement they brought it to Peter. He claimed it was the one from his vision.
- Massive excitement, enthusiasm, and emotion flowed through the crowd. They wanted a message from God and they believed they received it.
- They all picked up their weapons, opened the gates, and charged the enemy with the belief that they could not lose. This frightened their enemy as they relaxed only to see tens of thousands of screaming Christians charging at them.
- The Crusaders easily won this battle, and the Arabs and Turks fled, leaving their women in their tents outside the city.
  - The Crusaders pierced the women through the belly with lances, but did not sexually abuse them. They used this to brag of their superior moral quality.



## To Jerusalem!

- From here, the Crusaders waited another year to reach Jerusalem. Famine, pestilence, and battle had reduced their numbers down to 20,000 men.
  - In 1099, the Crusaders set out from Antioch to go towards Jerusalem.
- There really wasn't much in-between them. The question at hand was do they directly attack Jerusalem, or do they first attack the seaport city of Acre and control it so they could be resupplied by the Normans?
- Acre was the best seaport on the coastline of Palestine, and a long siege at Jerusalem would drain the current supplies.
- Many wanted to take Acre. Many others did not want another major battle with Arabs if it is unnecessary (they were fighting Arabs in Palestine rather than Turks). There is risk in attacking Acre. Most leaders agreed with bypassing Acre and going to Jerusalem.
  - Peter Bartholomew said God gave him a vision that if they do not go to Acre first, then they will fail to take Jerusalem. The military commanders thought it was a dumb idea.
  - To prove his visions true, he offered to pass the "ordeal by fire." He chose to walk barefoot over burning coals since this was a standard "truth determiner" of the day.
  - The coals burned his feet, he fell down causing the rest of him to burn, and he ended up dying from the burns. The military commanders were pleased. There would be no more visions from Peter Bartholomew to hinder wise military planning.
- The decision was settled then. They would go straight to Jerusalem.

## Ordeal by Fire



## Siege of Jerusalem

- The hilly geography of Jerusalem makes it easy to defend as a fortress.
  - A certain hermit said if they attacked the city on a certain day in a certain hour, victory would be guaranteed by God. They listened and the attack failed.
  - Another man claimed to have a vision that said they had to walk around the city barefoot and blow trumpets. The commanders were tired of visions and ignored him, but some soldiers complied.
- Jerusalem would be taken through normal siege means – ladders, grappling hooks, catapults, towers, etc. It was a six-week siege.
- The wall was breached through a new development. They put wheels on the siege tower for lateral movement.
  - At nighttime, the crusaders used these towers to get into the city at numerous locations.
- They stormed the city and took it from the inside. The whole battle for Jerusalem was a massive bloodbath. Once inside, they spared no one.
  - They massacred the entire Muslim and Jewish population, including women and children.
- A group of 100 then conquered Bethlehem.



## Results of the First Crusade

- The military results of the First Crusade were the restoration of western Asia Minor to Byzantine rule and the establishment of four independent Crusader states in Syria and Palestine:
  - County of Edessa, Principality of Antioch, County of Tripolis, and the Kingdom of Jerusalem.
  - They were called the Latin kingdoms because their rulers belonged to the Latin speaking Catholic Church.
  - The jewel of the Latin kingdoms was Jerusalem.
- The creation of these Latin Crusader states widened the schism between the East and West even more than the 1054 split.
  - Wherever the Westerners conquered, they seized the Eastern churches and set up their own Latin bishops and demanded that Eastern believers submit to them.
  - The oppressive treatment of Eastern Orthodox Christians by the Crusaders eventually caused the Orthodox believers native to the Middle East to join the Muslims to throw out the Crusaders.



## Conclusion

- The First Crusade was a violent military conflict in which Western Christendom took back much of Asia Minor, Syria, and Jerusalem.
- The height of Christian success is the First Crusade.
  - This was achieved despite no mission command and unity of effort.
- More Crusades would follow for the next two hundred years.
- By the measurement of Just War, it is very questionable whether or not the Crusades were justified.
  - Even if jus ad bello was met, certainly they failed at jus in bello.
- Politically and militarily, the Muslims simply received a taste of their medicine.
- Theologically, however, nothing about the Crusades can properly be called Christian by any biblical standard.