

The First Crusade 1096-1099 and The Peasants' Crusade 1095

Muslims (Moslems, Saracens, Mohammedans) were Arabs and Turks who in the seventh and eight centuries conquered the Holy Land, Egypt, Spain and North Africa and also invaded part of Southern Europe.

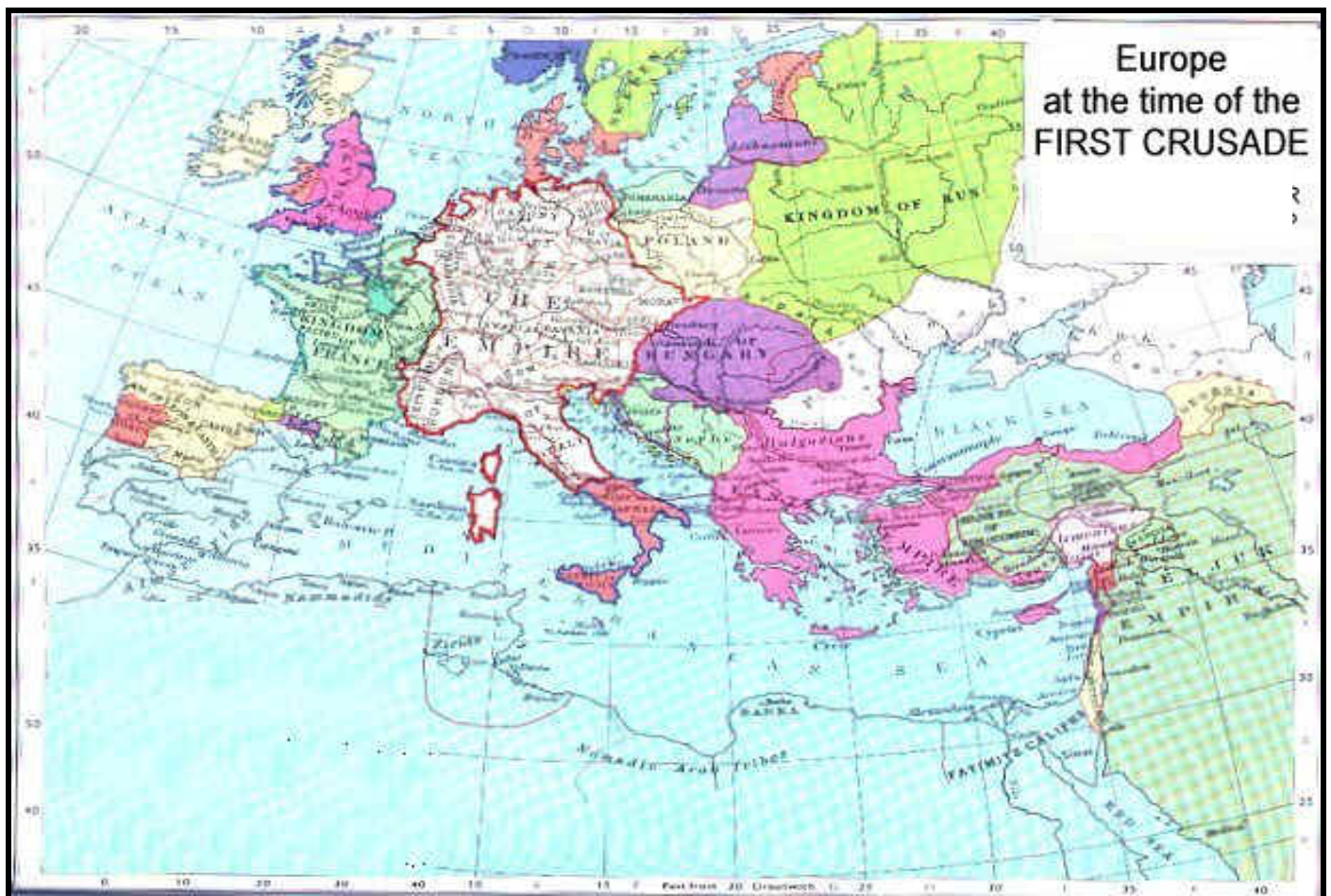
In 570 AD the **Prophet Mohammed** (Mahomet) was born in Mecca in modern day Saudi Arabia. When he was in his thirties he began to retreat to some nearby mountains to meditate in a cave. Whilst here he began to have visions in which the Archangel Gabriel appeared to him. He saw other visions that gave him messages, which were said to be directly from God. These messages were later written down in a book called the Koran, the Holy Book of Islam. This book provides Muslims with guidance on life, daily prayer, marriage, politics and law.

The word **Islam** means '**submission to God**'. Muslims call God '**Allah**'. They regard Jesus Christ as a prophet. They also believe in the figures in the Old Testament.

In 616 AD Mohammed started preaching in public but he upset many people with his new ideas and he and his followers had to move to Medina in 622 AD. This migration called the **HEJIRA** marks the start of the Islamic calendar.

By 630 AD Mohammed had raised an army of 10,000 men. He attacked and took the city of Mecca and since then Mecca has been the centre of Islam. Muslims always face towards Mecca when they pray.

In 632 AD Mohammed died but his followers carried on.



WHAT WERE THE CAUSES OF THE FIRST CRUSADE?

- In 1076 **Islamic soldiers conquered the Holy Lands** of Jerusalem. Islamic soldiers were about to invade Europe. Constantinople (Turkey) the Christian capital was under threat.
- Muslims tolerated the Christians at first, but later **pilgrims were prevented from entering Palestine**. Soon **stories of cruelty**, murder, etc. came back to Europe.
- **Alexius**, Emperor of the Byzantine Empire, **appealed to Pope Urban II** for help against Muslims who had invaded his empire and were threatening Constantinople.
- **Pope**, Urban II, was very ambitious and saw a chance to **increase his power, built up a personal army** and urged a holy war to free the Holy Land.
- Many European **nobles** wanted to increase their **wealth and gain lands**. Remember that on the death of a noble, his lands went to the eldest son. The younger sons had to seek fortune elsewhere.
- **Trade**, particularly in Italy was going well. The Holy Lands provided excellent opportunities for trade from India, and the Spice lands of China and Indonesia. £1 of spice bought in the Spice Islands could be sold for £1000 back in Europe. There were huge profits to be made. However, the Arabs were in control at the moment and made trade difficult. Control of the Holy Lands by Europeans would allow easier trading.
- Many rushed to go on crusade. **Life at home was often dull**. They were free from oaths, debts and were promised adventure, land and booty.
- Killing Christians was obviously a sin. However, the Church was now saying that it was a **Christian's duty to kill Muslims** in the name of God.
- Christians who went on a crusade would have all their **sins forgiven, have their debts repaid** and would be guaranteed a **place in heaven**.



CHRISTIAN VERSUS MUSLIM



GOD
|
JESUS CHRIST
(The Son of God)
|
Heaven
|
Bible
|
Cross
|
Jerusalem
|
The Sepulchre
|
Church
|
Priest
|
Crusader
|
Crusade
|
Sword



ALLAH
|
MOHAMMED
(The Prophet of God)
|
Jehannum
|
Koran
|
Crescent
|
Mecca
|
The Kaaba
|
Mosque
|
Mullah
|
Saracen
|
Jihad
|
Scimitar

The Peasants' Crusade

1095

It took a long time to get together an army and prepare for a crusade. However, a monk called **Peter the Hermit**, wanted to do his best to recover the Holy lands from the Muslims. He used to ride a donkey or walk barefoot visiting the towns and countryside. On his visit he used to preach and persuade people to join him on crusade. He was very persuasive and he soon amassed an army of 20,000 followers, most of whom were never to reach the Holy Land. At the same time another preacher called **Walter the Penniless** set out with another group of peasants. They were not soldiers, had no military training and were poorly equipped. They did not have enough wagons and carts to carry the food they needed, nor did they have the money to buy food on route. Soon in desperate hunger, they started to steal food from villages and towns through which they passed. Thousands of Jews were murdered. As the Peasants moved into Hungary, local villagers reacted to the peasants' violence and killed thousands and more were to starve to death. When they eventually reached Constantinople, Alexius refused to let them enter the city. He provided ships and sailed them to the other side of the Bosphorus. Here they were no match for the Muslims and were completely defeated in the first battle on October 21st. Walter died along with 300,000 others. Those that were not killed were captured and remained slaves for the rest of their lives. Peter the Hermit survived the tragic expedition to become a prior in a monastery.

Pope Urban's Speech at Clermont, France. 27th November 1095.

"Beloved Brethren, the Church of Christ is in mortal danger. Everywhere, Christians are being murdered and tortured, their churches destroyed, their altars defiled and the Holy Cross broken and spat upon by the terrible Muslim hordes. These followers of the so-called prophet Mohammed attack unarmed pilgrims on their way to the holy places in Jerusalem and other parts of the Holy land. They rob and kill them, kidnap the women and children and lead them away to lives of fearful slavery and suffering! ...Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth and Galilee - the whole country of our beloved Lord has been under the grip of the brutal Turks since 1071. How can we stand by and let this happen? How can we let our Lord be shamed and reviled in his own land? We must rescue him! We must raise a great Christian army and drive the vile Muslim from the holy places in Jerusalem, and from every scrap of holy soil that Christ once trod! I call for a great crusade of Christians everywhere! Rich and poor, powerful and humble! - Everyone must vow to take the Cross and go to fight in Christ's cause."

- The badge of the Crusades was a **red cross**. This red cross showed that each crusader had taken a vow (oath) to reach Jerusalem. Anyone who turned back would be excommunicated.
- The French word "croix" means cross and the word changed to croisades or crusades.
- The Crusaders called the Muslims, '**Saracens**'.
- This was the first of nine crusades in total.

The First Crusade 1096-1099

The Leaders

- Pope Urban II had made Bishop Adbenar the leader but he preferred to let others do the work and make decisions.
- Led by a number of Noblemen from Europe (not kings).
 1. **Hugh** of Vermandois,
 2. **Godfrey** of Bouillon
 3. **Baldwin** of Bouillon (brother)
 4. **Raymond** of Toulouse,
 5. **Robert** of Normandy, (William II's brother)
 6. **Eustace** of Boulogne
 7. **Bohemond** from Sicily.
- **Hugh**, 40 year old, younger son of King Henry I of France, gathered a small army of knights and adventurers and set off to seek his fortune in the East. Hugh would be the first of the crusading princes to arrive at Byzantium.
- **Godfrey**, the 37-year-old, needed little persuading and raised a good-sized army to accompany him to the Holy Land.
- Godfrey's younger brother, **Baldwin**, sought personal fortune.
- **Eustace**, older brother to Godfrey and Baldwin, also joined the Crusade, though not out of need for wealth because he already was rich. Eustace raised a much smaller army to follow him to Jerusalem.
- **Robert**, (The eldest son of William I) had to pledge Normandy to his brother, William Rufus, king of England, in order to raise the necessary funds to join the Crusade.
- 40 yr old **Bohemond**, left with no land after his father's death, also 'took the cross', along with thousands of fellow warriors from southern Italy and Sicily. He organized an experienced and well-armed army to accompany him and his nephew **Tancred** on crusade. Unlike most of the Crusader leaders, Bohemond was at least familiar with Turkish horse-archer tactics. Legend has it that Bohemond took his own scarlet cloak, ripped it to pieces and made crosses from it for each of his companions.
- Almost 60 years old, **Raymond**, had fought against Muslims in Spain. Like Bohemond, he had valuable tactical battlefield knowledge of the Muslim armies. He thought that he would be in overall command of the Crusader armies. He brought with him a large army from France. Raymond's tactical abilities were demonstrated early on, while his army passed through Dalmatia. The Dalmatians harassed the Crusaders until Raymond captured a number of his tormentors and had them cruelly mutilated and left dying as a warning to others.

The Journey to the Holy Land

- Their 1500 mile journey was extremely tiring and they soon found out that their heavy armour was not suited to the very hot climate of the holy land.
- They could not use the Mediterranean Sea as the Crusaders did not control the ports on the coast of the Middle East. Therefore, they had to cross land. They travelled from France through Italy, then Eastern Europe and then through what is now Turkey. They covered hundreds of miles, through scorching heat and also deep snow in the mountain passes.
- The Crusaders ran out of fresh water and according to a survivor of the First Crusade who wrote about his experiences after his return, some were reduced to drinking their own urine, drinking animal blood or water that had been in sewage.
- Food was bought from local people but at very expensive prices. Odo of Deuil claims that these men who were fighting for God were reduced to pillaging and plunder in order to get food.
- Disease was common especially as men were weakened by the journey and drinking dirty water. Dysentery was common. Heat stroke also weakened many Crusaders. Disease and fatigue affected rich and poor alike.



Arrival in the Holy Land

- Fortunately for the crusaders the Saracen leaders argued amongst each other.
- The Saracens, with their lighter weapons tried to avoid battles and preferred to seek protection behind the huge walls of their cities. The Crusaders often had to resort to starvation or use other siege tactics to force the Saracens to surrender.
- The first target of the Crusaders was the important fortress city of Nicaea. This city was taken by the Crusaders without too much trouble as the man in charge of it was away fighting.
- The Turks were defeated at the Battle of Dorylaeum.
- The next target for the Crusaders was Antioch - a strongly protected Turkish city. It took a seven month siege before the city fell. The next target was Jerusalem.
- The attack and capture of Jerusalem started on June 7th 1099. Jerusalem was well defended with high walls around it. The first attacks on the city were not successful as the Crusaders were short of materials for building siege machines. Once logs had arrived, two siege machines were built.
- On 15th July 1099 Jerusalem was recaptured.

Capture of Jerusalem

A monk called Fulcher was on the First Crusade. He wrote about the attack on the Holy City and he can be treated as an eye-witness as to what took place. Fulcher claimed that once the Crusaders had managed to get over the walls of Jerusalem, the Muslim defenders there ran away. Fulcher claimed that the Crusaders cut down anybody they could and that the streets of Jerusalem were ankle deep in blood. The rest of the Crusaders got into the city when the gates were opened. The slaughter continued and the Crusaders "killed whoever they wished". Those Muslims who had their lives spared, had to go round and collect the bodies before dumping them outside of the city because they stank so much. The Muslims claimed afterwards that 70,000 people were killed and that the Crusaders took whatever treasure they could.

Aftermath of the Capture of Jerusalem

- After the capture of Jerusalem the Holy Lands were divided into four new Christian States. Bohemond ruled **Antioch**, Baldwin ruled **Edessa**, Godfrey ruled **Jerusalem** and Raymond ruled **Tripoli**.
- This was the **only crusade that achieved its objective** - to recapture Jerusalem.
- The capture of Jerusalem did not end the Crusades as the Crusaders wanted to get rid of the Muslims from the whole region and not just Jerusalem. This desire led to the other crusades.

Why was the First Crusade Successful?

1. Crusader leaders were well motivated both religiously and personally.
2. Crusader leaders co-operated with each other.
3. Pope Urban was an inspirational Pope.
4. Crusaders soldiers were well equipped and trained. Muslims were not equipped to fight them in pitched battles.
5. The novelty of crusading was a good motivator.
6. Muslims leaders quarrelled amongst each other.
7. Muslims had not anticipated a crusade taking place.

