

Two Sides in a Crusade

In 1095, Pope Urban II decided that Europe's kingdoms should help the Byzantine emperor. The Byzantine Empire had faced many invasions. Now the Seljuk Turks were a strong force on the Byzantine borders. Speaking to a group of nobles, Pope Urban II called for all Christians to take up arms and take control of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The Pope's speech was witnessed and recorded by a nobleman named Fulcher of Chartres.

Many European men, women, and children joined the Crusades and fought in the Middle East. In 1099 they took Jerusalem. Wars continued in the region for many years. In 1187, the Muslim leader Saladin prepared to try to take Jerusalem back from the Christians.

Read the excerpt from Fulcher of Chartres' report of Pope Urban's speech. Then read Saladin's feelings about Jerusalem. Use the information in the speeches to help you answer the questions.

Fulcher of Chartres

"Although, O sons of God, you have promised more firmly than ever to keep the peace among yourselves and to preserve the rights of the church, there remains still an important work for you to do. . . . For your brethren who live in the east are in urgent need of your help, and you must hasten to give them the aid which has often been promised them. For, as the most of you have heard, the Turks and Arabs have attacked them and have conquered the territory of Romania [the Byzantine Empire]. . . . They have occupied more and more of the lands of those Christians, and have overcome them in seven battles. They have killed and captured many, and have destroyed the churches and devastated the empire. If you permit them to continue thus for awhile with impurity, the faithful of God will be much more widely attacked by them. On this account I, or rather the Lord, beseech you as Christ's heralds to publish this everywhere and to persuade all people of whatever rank, foot-soldiers and knights, poor and rich, to carry aid promptly to those Christians and to destroy that . . . race from the lands of our friends. I say this to those who are present, it is meant also for those who are absent. Moreover, Christ commands it. All who die by the way, whether by land or by sea, or in battle against the [Muslims], shall have immediate remission of sins. This I grant them through the power of God with which I am invested. . . ."

The Words of Saladin

"If God blesses us by enabling us to drive His enemies out of Jerusalem, how fortunate and happy we would be! For Jerusalem has been controlled by the enemy for ninety-one years, during which time God has received nothing from us here in the way of adoration. At the same time, the zeal of the Muslim rulers to deliver it languished. Time passed, and so did many [in different] generations, while the Franks succeeded in rooting themselves strongly there. Now God has reserved the merit of its recovery for one house, the house of the sons of Ayyub [Saladin's family], in order to unite all hearts in appreciation of its members."

1. What reasons does the Pope give for fighting for Jerusalem? What arguments does he use to persuade his listeners to go on a Crusade?
2. What reasons does Saladin give for retaking Jerusalem? What arguments does he use to inspire his listeners?
3. What are the similarities and differences between the arguments the Pope and Saladin use to persuade their listeners?
4. What impressions do these speeches give you about the Crusades? What ideas do the speeches give you about the purposes of the people who fought during the Crusades?

