

Activity 6. Christian Crusaders Conquer Jerusalem (1099 AD)

Source: <http://www.iun.edu/~histjbp/Hist113Readings/CrusadeDocs.pdf> (Accessed March 15, 2010)

Background: In 1095 AD, Roman Catholic Pope Urban II urged European Christian knights to launch a “crusade,” or holy war, against the Islamic world. Their goal would be to conquer and occupy the Biblical Christian “holy land” in the Eastern Mediterranean. The First Crusade ended in 1099 with the capture of Jerusalem and the massacre of the city’s inhabitants. In the 12th century, William of Tyre, a Roman Catholic archbishop of one of the Crusader Kingdoms, wrote a history of the Kingdom of Jerusalem that included a description of the conquest of the city. While it is not a first-person account, it does provide historians with insight into both events and Christian attitudes toward what took place. Between the 11th and 15th centuries there were over a dozen Christian Crusades against a range of enemies, including internal dissenters.

Instructions: Read passages A – D and answer questions 1 – 4.

Questions

1. How did the Christian Crusaders treat the people of the city of Jerusalem?
2. What happened after the Crusaders had secured control over the city?
3. In your view, why would people commit such actions in the name of God and religion?
4. William of Tyre did not personally witness these events. In your view, is this a reliable account? Explain.

A. It seemed divinely ordained that the faithful who were fighting for the glory of the Savior should have obtained the consummation of their desires at the same hour and on the very day on which the Lord had suffered in that city for the salvation of the world . . . It was fitting . . . that, at that very hour, those who were members of His body and imitators of Him should triumph in His name over His enemies.

B. Regardless of age and condition, they laid low, without distinction, every enemy encountered. Everywhere was frightful carnage, everywhere lay heaps of severed heads, so that soon it was impossible to pass or to go from one place to another except over the bodies of the slain . . . A crowd of knights and foot soldiers . . . massacred all those who had taken refuge. No mercy was shown to anyone, and the whole place [the Temple] was flooded with the blood of victims.

C. It was indeed the righteous judgment of God which ordained that those who had profaned the sanctuary of the Lord by their superstitious rites and had caused it to be an alien place to His faithful people should expiate [do penance for] their sin by death . . . The rest of the soldiers roved through the city in search of wretched survivors . . . These were dragged out into public view and slain like sheep.

D. When at last the city had been set in order in this way, arms were laid aside. Them clad in fresh garments, with clean hands and bare feet, in humility and contrition, they began to make the rounds of the venerable places which the Savior had deigned to sanctify . . . With tearful sighs and heartfelt emotion they pressed kisses upon these revered spots.