

Were the crusades political or religious? essay sample

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



The Middle Ages was a religious age that was dominated by papacy. The Crusades show the religiousness of the Europeans in the Middle Ages, though we question ourselves if that was their only motive: Religion. People fought the Muslims, Seljuk Turks, to regain the Middle East in the name of “crusaders” which means “marked with the cross”. This was the beginning of the Europe’s waking up to use their growing power to look outside Europe and dominate more lands for religious, economic and political reasons. As many as 600, 000 crusaders left Europe and marched overland to Jerusalem to “save” the Holy Land of Christianity despite its many difficulties and danger facing them. So then why would all these many crusaders have left their home, family behind to face the threat of the diseases and most likely death? Would it really only have been the pure faiths of religion in them? Or was there something else beyond religious aspects that the Christians wanted? Were the Crusades political or religious?

Indeed, this is a very controversial topic. But the Crusades were merely religious for political reasons. It is very difficult to point out where the real reasons lie, since both religion and politics involve in the Crusades. Religion, in this case, was simply a great excuse for the Europeans to crush their enemies, the Muslims, and expand their territories and wealth. In addition, Feudalism, the main system of government based on land ownership and military loyalty and service that dominated most of Europe in the 11th Century, supported the Crusades. Pope Urban promised the crusaders a choice of fiefs of the Muslim lands that they conquered, which was especially important to the second sons of the nobility who couldn’t inherit their father’s land in Europe because only first sons did. The popes were very

important in persuading the many people of many classes to join such a dangerous group. However the popes did succeed, which shows how strong religion was at that time.

“ The promised land offered no certainty but danger, yet they deserted their own possessions in a greedy struggle for those of others.” -said the German historian, Ekkehard who had visited Jerusalem in 1101. Not only were the crusaders promised of land, but also all their sins would be remitted, and they were guaranteed entrance to heaven. At that time, even Kings were afraid of God, and that’s basically how the Church gained so much power and wealth. The intentions of joining the crusades of various men differed. Some were too poor that they went to fight not only against the Muslims but even their fellow Christians as well in any chance of relieving their poverty. Some needed freedom from their debts, and some were waiting for punishment that they deserved by their sins. The Crusades were merely for peoples’ wealth and salvation, which included some religious aspects.

Here is a line from a letter from a crusader in 1098 to a family member: “ You may know for certain, my beloved, that of gold, silver, and many other kinds of riches, I now have twice as much as you, my love, supposed me to have when I left you...”

When in 1073, the Byzantine Emperor Michael VII of Constantine requested Pope Gregory VII to send an army to help him regain the lost territories of Asia Minor, Pope Gregory thought it was a great chance and an excuse to create an army of his own to conquer the East. Even the popes, such as

Gregory VII, one of the most influential popes in history's motive was power and wealth. And since the peasants were urged by strong preaching, they believed in the popes that the Crusades was for a religious cost, and hoping for freedom, started off in mobs to Jerusalem.

The fundamental contradiction implicit in the Crusades was murdering because Christ disapproved in killing and it was a sin to kill. The people were still scared of God, and they had to do something about it to continue their killing in the Crusades. The people were scared that they'd get punished when they were crusaders for God. This shows that the Crusades were called "religious" but contained many more reasons beyond that. The crusaders deviated Christ's words so that it wouldn't be a sin by saying that Christ only said it was a sin to kill Christians. The Europeans murdered their enemies - the Muslims who were gradually gaining power for their own good and changed Christ's orders so it wouldn't be a sin.

The Muslims, after the Third Crusade, believed that the Christians massacred all their prisoners in Jerusalem either for paying back for the death of the Christians that the Muslims had slain or because the King of England thought it was not good to have so many prisoners when he decided to conquer Ascalon. Both reasons have got nothing to do with religion. Christians were viewed as uncivilized enemies to the Muslims after the Crusades because of the violence. The Crusades, although said it was for Christianity, got the Christians to be viewed very violent and uncultured. Why would this be if it were purely for religion?

There still are problems with Israel and Palestine that relate far back to the Crusades. The Muslims, after conquering Jerusalem, gained more power and the country Palestine was created. Zionism, the movement to reunite Jews scattered across the world and settle them in Palestine, rose in the late 19th Century and proclaimed the State of Israel in 1948. So the Palestinians were forced into exile in other countries. The United States supported the Israeli house, mostly because many Jews in Israel were very powerful. It made it unjust to the Palestinians. Even now when the Palestinian National Authority in Gaza and several towns on the West Bank was set up in 1994, there are constant suicide bombings and violence between the two nations. This is all because of the Crusades.

Political matters must be dealt in political manners. Religion and other human rights should not interfere with political matters because it leads to wars and constant conflicts. The 9/11 terror in the United States also relates to this because the United States were highly unfair to the Muslims, and so the hatred by the Muslims was demonstrated in the terror attack. If this doesn't stop, there is no hope for peace but a possibility of the 3rd World War.

The Crusades make it seem like it was for religious growth but actually, it's religiously covering up the political reasons of the Crusades. It was political in religious ways, and religious in political ways. It was for sure the beginning of Europe's looking outside, using their power and wealth to expand their territories and wealth for economic and political reasons, using religion as an

excuse. This pattern did and will go on for hundreds of years in Europe and throughout the world.