

# Sample essay on religious crusades

[Experience](#), [Failure](#)



## **The First Crusade**

The first religious crusade took place in 1096 and lasted three years ending in 1099. The crusade was started by Pope Urban II in November, 1095 in response to the request of Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Komnenos, who sought the help of the western volunteers to resist the invasion of the Seljuq Turks from Anatolia (RF, 2014). Soon an additional goal of recapturing the sacred city of Jerusalem and the Holy Land became the primary objective of the crusaders, who alongside also wanted to liberate the Eastern Christians from the bondage of the Muslim rulers. Though the seeds of crusade were planted in 1095, the real crusade, however, took form in 1096 when the crusade went out of the control of the Pope.

The movement took shape in two waves. Firstly, a group of lower class people joined the army of the crusaders, followed by the peasants and the oppressed, dissatisfied and outcast members of the lower clergy, runaway monks, women and children. They under the leadership of Peter the Hermit and Walter Sans Avoir reached Constantinople, and were known to be unruly and undisciplined (Phillips, 2002). They targeted mainly Jews for their barbarism and met a pitiful end in Hungary.

The second wave of crusaders was the main crusaders who were comprised of four armies, 1) the men of Lorraine under the leadership of Godfrey, Eustace, and Baldwin of Bouillon; 2) Provençals under the leadership of Raymond of Toulouse; 3) Northern French under the leadership of Robert of Normandy; and 4) Italian Normans under the leadership of Bohemund and Tancred (Phillips, 2002). The crusader armies first took over Nicaea, a city that was previously under the Byzantine rule before it became the capital of

the Seljuq Sultanate under the leadership of Kilij Arslan I. Then they defeated the Sultan of Iconium at Dorylaeum. Soon they captured Antioch in 1098 and finally took over Jerusalem in 1099.

The success of the first crusade served as an inspiration to the subsequent crusades. It also inspired artists and poets, who made various compositions extolling the exploits of Robert of Flanders, Godfrey of Bouillon and others. Torquato Tasso composed an epic poem in 1580 giving a fictional account of the capture of Jerusalem, and this inspired other artists like George Frideric Hande to compose music on the basis of Tasso's poem (Edgington, 2013).

## **The Second Crusade**

The Second Crusade took place in 1145 and continued till 1149. The County of Edessa, which was the first Crusader state founded during the First Crusade, was captured by Imad ad-Din Zengi, the ruler of the Zengid dynasty in 1144 (Phillips, 2002). It led to the Second Crusade announced by Pope Eugene III, who felt that it was necessary to resist the Muslim invaders trying to capture the Holy Lands. The primary objective of the crusade was to retrieve the County of Edessa from the clutch of Muslim rulers, provide military reinforcements to Jerusalem and secure the pilgrim pass.

The Second Crusade was the first crusade that was headed by European kings, Conrad III of Germany and Louis VII of France, with the assistance received from many European nobles. Large armies came from France, Germany, and England and many smaller nations. The crusaders first launched an attack on the Muslim city of Damascus, which sought help from Saif ad-Din Ghazi I of Mosul and Nur ad-Din of Aleppo to withstand the approaching armies of the crusaders. After the arrival of Saif ad-Din and Nur

ad-Din and their vast armies, the local crusaders refused to continue with the siege, leaving no option to the kings, but to retreat and thus, the Second Crusade led to its failure (Phillips, 2002). It was the lack of communication between the two kings, which primarily attributed to the failure of the Second Crusade. Conrad and Louis VII launched attacks on separate targets, Conrad on the Seljuk Turks capital, Iconium and Louis VII on Anatolia. Their separation provided the Turks with an opportunity to march from one location to another speedily without being overwhelmed or outnumbered by the crusaders (HLS, 2014). Since the Second Crusade was a failure, it did not leave any legacy for the world to follow except that the failure brought in immense economic suffering in Europe immediately.

## **References**

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