

# Explain why pope urban II called for a crusade

[Religion](#), [Catholic](#)



In 1095, at the Council of Clermont, Pope Urban II made a powerful and well planned speech. His message was clear and precise, ' go to the holy land in Jerusalem and claim back what is rightfully yours or die trying, and in return remission of all your sins with the assurance of the imperishable glory of the kingdom of heaven'. He was addressing Christians from all over France calling for a ' Crusade' in the name of God and as many would argue, abusing his authority and status he received from the Catholic Church.

What occurred during the First Crusade is well known to many, whereas the reason behind Pope Urban II calling the Crusade is a highly debated and contradicting issue. One of the reasons which are occasionally cited for Urban's calling of the First Crusade is the call of help which Alexius Comnenus had sent to Urban at the Council of Piacenza. This letter was sent in response to the loss of Byzantine land which had occurred after the battle of Manzikert in 1072.

The letter When Urban received this letter it is debateable as to whether he was actually galvanised by the thought of helping Alexius or if his main motive was an attempt at ending the schism between the Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox church in Constantinople. This is likely as it was one of the ideals of the papal reform movement which Urban belonged to, following in the footsteps of his predecessor, Gregory VII. By making out to help the Byzantine emperor in their time of need, Urban hoped to heal the schism.

Another reason behind why Urban called for a Crusade is for religious purposes. He felt Christians in the East needed to be rescued from persecution and had ' suffered mightily at the hands of the Turks' and there

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men and children were being persecuted and their women raped, this was also backed up in Alexius's letter to the Pope. Christians were supposedly suffering under Muslim rule after the Byzantine Empire was defeated by the Seljuk Turks who reverted to Islam, at the point when Islam was a religion quickly rising in power and dominance.

Urban saw this violation of the Christian race as a great disrespect of Christianity and used it as a stimulus in his speech at the Council of Clermont which angered and therefore manipulated the Christian race into heading to the holy land for the First Crusade. Finally, an additional reason for Urban's calling for a so-called Crusade was that he felt 'the lands of Christ needed to be reclaimed' and in the control of Christianity not in the hands of 'infidels'. Jerusalem is at the centre of the Christian faith and is the religion's birth place. It is the land in which Jesus was crucified and then, as Christians believe, brought back to life in a miracle event. Urban said in his speech, 'wrest that land from the wicked race, that land which the scripture says floweth with milk and honey and was given by God to the children of Israel'. By these few words we can understand why Urban felt so strongly that it was the land of Christians and why he ordered for it to be reclaimed, even if it meant death.

At the time of Urban's speech Jerusalem was under the rule of Muslims, who also have a strong attachment with the land as it is the place where the holy prophet descended to heaven. Urban however believed that it belonged to the Christians and therefore ordered it to be reclaimed in the 'name of God'. Pope Urban II called for a Crusade at the Council of Clermont to claim back what he believed rightfully belonged to the Christians and unite the Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches. Through the cover of Alexius's plea for help

Urban strengthened relations with the Byzantine Empire and called on a Crusade that was to claim thousands of lives.