

History

The Crusades - Lesson 4 of 6

The Capture of Jerusalem

Why did Europeans join the Crusades?

Mr Wallace



The Siege of Jerusalem

The early attempt to take the city of Jerusalem involved Raymond attacking from the south west and Godfrey attacking from the north west. But these early attacks failed. The walls were strongly defended and too high to get over without ladders. The Crusaders did not have wood to make new ladders. Their situation grew worse, all the wells had been poisoned, and clean water was miles away. The situation grew more desperate as food supplies ran low and the Europeans suffered in the heat and dust of the desert. Then local Muslim forces, who the Crusaders called **Saracens**, launched surprise attacks. The Crusaders needed some sort of breakthrough if they were going to take the city.



The Siege of Jerusalem

The breakthrough came when a hidden supply of wood was discovered. Many Crusaders believed that this was the result of **divine** help and that God was truly on their side. This wood helped them build a battering ram, several ladders and two large **siege towers** on wheels. These towers were covered in animal skins and branches to protect people inside. The crusaders could then climb up the tower and attempt to fight the 'Saracens' on top of the walls.



The Siege of Jerusalem

With siege towers and battering rams the fighting for Jerusalem became even more brutal and desperate. At one point, the Crusaders captured an Egyptian spy and catapulted him over the walls back into Jerusalem. The 'Saracens' responded by spitting on crosses. The Crusaders, however, could not get the towers close enough to get into the city. At this point,

Raymond of Aguilers tells us:

"The Bishop Adhemar appeared before us saying: 'You who have come from distant lands to worship God, let each one turn from his evil ways. Then with bare feet march around Jerusalem praising God. If you do this and then make a great attack on the city on the ninth day, it will be captured.'"



The Siege of Jerusalem

The Crusaders then did as they were told and marched around Jerusalem holding crosses and **relics**, praising God. The fighting continued, on 13th July 1099, **Godfrey of Bouillon** made the key breakthrough. He noticed a section of the wall was less defended, and would be easier for his tower to attack. At night, he moved a tower over a mile to this part of the city walls. The next morning they attacked, and the fighting became more and more intense. Stones, wood, even fire was thrown at the Crusaders, but they fought on. Eventually, a flaming arrow shot from the tower started a fire among the 'Saracens' who fled. There was an opening, and the soldiers rushed out of the top of the tower, over the walls, into the city.



The Siege of Jerusalem

Once inside, the Crusaders began a shocking slaughter of the inhabitants of the city, killing around 30,000. According to **Raymond of Aguilers:**

“Some of our men cut off the heads of their enemies; others shot them with arrows, so that they fell from the towers. But these were small matters compared to what happened at the Temple of Solomon. What happened there? If I tell the truth, you will hardly believe... In the Temple of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees. The city was filled with corpses and blood.”



The Siege of Jerusalem

A different account, known as the **Gesta Francorum**, says this:

“Our men followed, killing even to the Temple of Solomon, where the slaughter was so great that our men waded in blood up to their ankles.

...They also ordered all the Saracen dead to be cast outside because of the great stench, since the whole city was filled with their corpses; and so the living Saracens dragged the dead before the exits of the gates and arranged them in heaps, as if they were houses. No one ever saw or heard of such slaughter of pagan people. No one knows their number except God alone”



Glossary

Divine - Godly, or from God/with God's blessing

Saracens - The name given by Crusaders to the Muslim enemies they fought against.

Siege Tower - A military machine that was used to try and get over walls

Relic - An object that has special importance to people, e.g. a religious object

Pagan - Pagan was often used to describe people who were not Christian.



Questions

1. What word did the Crusaders use to describe the Muslim soldiers?
2. What discovery convinced some Crusaders that God was on their side?
3. What was built to help the Crusaders get into Jerusalem?
4. How did **Godfrey of Bouillon** make the key breakthrough in taking the city?
5. According to the **Gesta Francorum**, what happened once the Crusaders were inside?

Challenge: Why might some of the Crusaders have believed that they only took Jerusalem because of God?

