Holy War for the Holy Land;
Tragic Violence, European Triumph
In 1096 The First Crusade was scheduled to begin. For the past year the idea of God promoted violence had been cultivated throughout Europe, and was about to be unleashed on the Middle East. The three years that would follow would be overflowing with escalating and tragic violence and brutality. In 1095 Urban the Second called Catholic Europe to a war against the Seljuk Turks to reclaim Asia minor for the Byzantine Empire, Setting a precedent for future Middle Eastern crusades, creating resentment between Muslims and Christians which endured for centuries.

**Background**

In the fourth century Jerusalem has become a prosperous city. The Christian rule was still strong and many churches were built. This increased the christian presence but attracted the view of other nations who also viewed Jerusalem as holy. Many people moved to Jerusalem and shops and economy flourished. According to Ralph Gabler "innumerable multitude from all over the world began to flock to the Saviour's sepulchre in Jerusalem."

In the fifth century the Roman Empire fell. This plunges Europe into a period of poverty and seclusion none as the Middle Ages or Dark Ages. This makes much of Europe hungry for money inspiring various motives and eventually some of the popularity of the first Crusade.

In the eleventh century the Seljuk Turks entered Asia Minor. Seljuk Turks were a new branch of Islam which was incredibly violent and aggressive. The Seljuk Turks swiftly conquered Asia Minor and most of the Middle East. Much of Asia Minor at this time was controlled by the Byzantine empire. After the conquests of the Seljuks the Byzantine empire was left small, defenceless and without the military force to reclaim the lost land. There conquest also included many Muslim lands including Jerusalem and significant portions of the Middle East. While in Jerusalem Peter the Hermit heard a report of how a Christian was treated and replied "You may be assured, holy father, that if the Roman church and the princes of the West should learn from a zealous and a reliable witness the calamities which you suffer, there is not the slightest doubt that they would hasten to remedy the evil, both by words and deeds. Write them zealously both to the lord Pope and the Roman church and to the kings and princes of the West, and confirm your letter by the authority Of your seal. I, truly, for the sake of the salvation of my soul, do not hesitate to undertake this task. And I aim prepared under God's guidance to visit them all, to exhort them all, zealously to inform them of the greatness of your sufferings and to urge them to hasten to your relief." Around this time the emperor of the Byzantine empire, emperor Alexios. Sent a request for help to Pope Urban the Second for a force to retake Asia Minor. With many motives including establishing a Catholic presence in the Byzantine empire, and retaking Jerusalem for Christianity encouraged Pope Urban to gather Catholic Europe for what would be known as the First Crusade.

**Build up**

In 1095 many Catholic church leaders, including Pope Urban, met in Clermont, France. Many things were discussed at this meeting but a large portion of the meeting was devoted to the Seljuk’s conquest of Asia Minor. After the meeting Pope Urban spoke to the people of Clermont and called all of Europe to take up the cross and take back the Holy Land. Pope Urban referred to the hardships and tragedies faced by Christians in the Holy Land 'I urge you', the Pope said, ‘the thousands of people who have died horribly and take action for the Holy Places.’ During the speech the Pope used words which would inspire Europe greatly and both
invigorate and infuriate Christians all over Europe. The work, *Christians and the First Crusade*, said that "Urban II's call at Clermont was the result of a carefully orchestrated amalgamation of spiritual fanaticism and social realism." After the speech the people of Clermont responded by shouting “God wills it” and many took up the cross and vows which gave the First Crusade the ambience of a pilgrimage.

After Pope Urban's speech, word of the Crusade spread incredibly quickly. Peter the Hermit traveled over Europe to try and encourage the Crusade. Peter was incredibly effective at convincing peasants and the average man which led to an event known as the Peasants Crusade. As peasants joined and began the Pilgrimage to Constantinople they expected the local population to provide food and supplies out of admiration for their noble quest. When they were refused food they were forced to steal food and sometimes they would pillage entire towns.

In Austria a fight broke out because a peasant thought he was being overcharged for boots which turned violent. In the end many Peasant Crusaders but many more Austrians were killed. In October 1096 they arrived at Constantinople they were refused food and shelter. Peter the hermit advised the peasants to wait but in their impatience and desperation they crossed into Asia Minor. Unsupplied and many unarmed they were quickly slaughtered by the Seljuk Turks, the first Tragedy of the First Crusade.

After many months of promoting and getting prepared for the First Crusade the Crusaders had finally arrived at Constantinople. No royalty had joined the First Crusade but people from all other walks of life had arrived in preparation for the reclamation of the Holy Land. Three main leaders emerged during this time Duke Godfrey, Bohemond, and Baldwin, Godfrey's brother. Emperor Alexios was dismayed by the site of the tens of thousands of crusaders when he expected a select few, well trained mercenaries. Emperor Alexios still viewed the Crusaders as mercenaries were as the Crusaders thought themselves going to war for for Christianity. This started conflict when a few Crusaders refused to take an oath of loyalty to emperor Alexios. After much negotiation all Crusaders took the oath of loyalty that all conquered lands would be returned to the Byzantine empire. In April 1096 the First Crusade was scheduled to begin. For the past year the idea of God promoted violence had been cultivated throughout Europe, and was about to be unleashed on the Middle East. The three years that would follow would be overflowing with escalating and tragic violence and brutality.

**Heart of the story**

In April 1097 the First Crusade begins. Many Crusaders were already looking forward to one of their main objectives, the city of Antioch. Antioch was the site of one of the first churches and was incredibly important to many people spiritually. Once the Crusaders reached Antioch they saw huge amounts of Christians outside the city walls exiled for the duration of the battle to prevent betrayal. The city was well defended as the Seljuk Turks were skilled archers and repelled attacks continuously as the Crusaders were running low on supplies. Eventually a blacksmith named Firouz who owned three towers let the Crusaders enter through his towers and capture the city. A small force entered the city and lowered the drawbridge. The capture of Antioch was a massive triumph for the crusaders but there victory was cut short. Shortly after the Crusaders captured the city there was a Muslim army coming to retake Antioch. After the Crusaders heard of the counter assault many citizens and Crusaders deserted and ran to
safety. The Crusaders who remained quickly repaired weak points in the city and repelled the counter assault and secured Antioch. Most of the Crusaders were content with returning Antioch but Bohemond tragically broke his oath to emperor Alexios and claimed Antioch for himself. Philips Jonathan said “Bohemond wanted to stay and consolidate his hold on Antioch, arguing that since Alexios had not fulfilled his side of the bargain then his oath to the Greeks was void and the conquest remained his.” Because emperor Alexios did not provide the agreed compensation Bohemond refused to both give Antioch to the Byzantine Empire and to continue the crusade.

As the Crusaders traveled to their final goal of Jerusalem Baldwin's wife died. This tragedy shattered Baldwin’s moral drive and he split off from the main group to conquer his own land. He left with a small Crusader force to go to a Christian ruled city. When he arrived he offered the city protection if he got to rule. At first Baldwin was incredibly friendly with the town and won the hearts of the people and the leader. The Leader adopted Baldwin and entitled him the city after he died. After a few weeks Baldwin ordered his Crusading force to assassinate the ruler and days later Baldwin, his son, became King of the city.

As the Crusaders continued, they offered the city Marok-Aluva to surrender peacefully if all of the citizens went to a designated spot. When the Crusaders arrived all of the citizens were in the designated spot and the Crusaders slaughtered them all. They plundered homes and killed all of the citizens, Christians and Muslim alike. The crusader stayed at the town long and resorted to Cannibalism of the dead. The idea of this tragic display of violence was to intimidate the rest of the Seljuks to surrender but when this did not happen the crusaders got all the more violent. This was the beginning of the tragic unmorally driven finale of the crusade.

After 3 years of strife, Triumph and Tragedy, on June 3 1099 the Crusaders finally reached their goal of Jerusalem. At this point Jerusalem had been taken over by the Egyptians who were another Muslim force in the region. The Egyptian had cut down all of the trees in the area and rallied many other Muslim forces in the area to protect Jerusalem. The Crusaders, luckily, found were all of the wood was buried by the Egyptians and began constructing two siege towers. A few nights later the siege towers were constructed with wheels for mobility and were being rolled slowly into position. As they were doing so one of the towers caught fire due to the barrage of arrows sent down by the Muslims and burned to the ground. The other tower was still being rolled into position slowly. Duke Godfray, after studying the defences, found a weak point in the wall and ordered the siege tower to be transported there. This was a risky and time consuming task while the Crusaders were under constant fire. Eventually the Crusaders rolled the siege tower into place and began to pour into the city. All who were seen in the city were tragically killed; a soldier wrote after the battle “The battle raged throughout the day, so that the Temple was covered with their blood.” Muslims Christians and the Jewish alike were killed, Houses and buildings were plundered, and countless lives and artifacts were lost. Philips Jonathan said “Although the oft-repeated phrase of 'wading up to their knees in blood' is an exaggeration, being a line from the apocalyptic Book of Revelation (14:20).”

**Aftermath**

After the siege of Jerusalem the strongest leaders of the first Crusade discussed who would rule Jerusalem. Godfrey refused to rule Jerusalem saying that that God was the true King. The leaders took this for what it was but the Church representatives, after a careful debate
in which they brought in servants of the Crusaders in question, said that Godfrey must be the ruler of Jerusalem. At first he refused but eventually accepted to rule Jerusalem. William of Tyre said “After the aforementioned Lord Duke had, by God's grace, been confirmed as the head of the Kingdom and after all the quarrels which had arisen had abated, the Kingdom in his days grew more secure and well established.” During Godfrey's reign Jerusalem prospered and was secure. Three years later Godfrey died and his brother Baldwin took over and claimed the title king.

After the Crusade many Crusader states were established. Crusader states were smaller and were governed by the Crusader leaders. After the Crusade most of the Crusaders went back home to Europe. Those who stayed became the Knights Hospitaller and the Knights Templar. With the end of the Crusade there were many dead and wounded, it was the job of the Knights Hospitallers to treat the sick and bury the dead. The job of the knights Templar to escort pilgrims and people from Europe to the Holy Land and Crusader states. William of Tyre describes the Knights templar as such “certain noble men of knightly rank, religious men, devoted to God and fearing him, bound themselves to Christ's service in the hands of the Lord Patriarch. They promised to live in perpetuity as regular canons, without possessions, under vows of chastity and obedience. “ The Knights Templar had no possessions and only answered to the ruler of Jerusalem who provided for the knights in both shelter and basic needs. After some years they began to fall away from their traditional view and began to accumulate wealth in exchange for their services and became very wealthy.

Because most of the Crusaders broke their oath the Byzantine empire did not gain much of their land back. The Byzantine empire did take back Nice but little more after that. The oath that were broken would negatively affect the relationship between the Byzantines and the rest of Europe. This also caused complications as Constanople is the most direct way to the Middle East and is the capital of the Byzantine empire.

**Legacy**

The First Crusade inspired an increase in historical writing. Many historians in the eleventh century were uninspired because there were no great triumphs they were alive to witness, but the First Crusade gave them this inspiration to write about. This influx in historical writing continued throughout history and affects us today. This is a Triumph because it allows us to learn more about our past and guide about our future.

The first Crusade also inspired the following Crusades threw a series of back and forth conflict between Muslims and Christians for the Holy Land. After the First Crusade the second failed. The third one was successful and the fourth ended in conquest of already Christian lands. All of these Crusades ended in tragic bloodshed and violence.

A triumph of the First Crusade is that it brought together Europe. Europe at the time was a diverse and warring nation but the first crusade brought the continent together. This extends to future positive relationships and less conflicts in the future. Also this allowed that Europe could grow and prosper. Europe, afterward, was able to look to the future and discover new things and accept new ideas and greatly benefited Europe in the long run.

After the Crusaders returned they brought riches and spices from the Middle East. At the time of the First Crusade Europe was in the Dark or Middle Ages. The return from the First
Crusade jump started Europe's economy and sparked interest in the outside world. This brought Europe out of the Dark Ages and into an age of exploration.

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