

Comparing Muslim and Christian Views about the Conquest and Reconquest of Jerusalem Student Worksheet

Introduction:

The city of Jerusalem in Israel is considered a holy city by three of the world's great religions: Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. In 1099, the city (located in what was then known as Palestine) was conquered by the Christians (Latins) during the First Crusade. A few years earlier, in 1095, Pope Urban VII gave a speech at the Council of Clermont after the Byzantines had asked him for military aid against the increasingly menacing Seljuk Turks. The Pope saw an opportunity to accomplish two goals: to reunite the Eastern and Western Roman Empires, and to stop the kings and princes of Europe from scuffling among themselves. He called for a "Truce of God" between Europe's rulers and asked them to take back the Holy Land from the Muslims. Thus the first Crusaders began the long journey to the East. They traversed strange lands of which they had no knowledge; they also didn't know anything about the military strengths and weaknesses of the communities and cities they encountered. When they arrived in Jerusalem, they managed to capture the famous city from the Muslims in 1099. The Christians used brutal tactics to defeat the Muslims during this "holy war." Jerusalem remained in the hands of the Christians for 89 years, until a talented King of Egypt named Salah-al-Din, or Saladin, took it back by force in 1187. In this lesson, you will read accounts of the battle for Jerusalem. You will decide if they agree or disagree in any important ways.

All Web links for this lesson can be found at:

<http://www.socialstudies.com/worldlinks.html>

Part I

Maps and the History of Jerusalem

Go to <http://www.usm.maine.edu/~maps/exhibit1/04large.jpg> to see the earliest known map of Jerusalem. Note the Temple (Palace) of Solomon in the center and the names of the gates.

1. How easy or difficult do you think it would be to defend Jerusalem as depicted in this picture? To attack it? Explain your reasoning.

The Capture of Jerusalem by Saladin, 1187

Go to <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1187saladin.html> and answer the following questions.

2. Is this author writing from a Christian or Muslim viewpoint? How do you know?

3. Why does the author write that for two weeks "it seemed that God had charge over the city"?

4. Briefly describe how Salah-al-Din created a surprise attack.

5. Briefly summarize the capture of Jerusalem from the point of view of this author.

Part II

"Some Medieval Accounts of Salah al-Din's Recovery of Jerusalem (Al-Quds)"

Go to <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/med/salahdin.html>.

This page presents excerpts from Muslim accounts of the recapture of Jerusalem by the Muslims in 1187; however, these excerpts are interwoven into a secondary source account. You will not have to read all the text on the page. Instead, the lesson will direct you to find certain passages to focus upon. In this lesson you will try to determine whether the Muslim accounts agree with the account you read in Part I of this lesson. Find and read the passage that begins "From this side of the city...". The passage is the fifth paragraph down from the heading "Salah al-Din's Attack".

1. Think back to the woodcut of Jerusalem that you viewed in Part I of this lesson. Does the Jerusalem described in the passage here match the woodcut's representation of Jerusalem? Explain.

2. Does the city seem to be well-fortified or not? Provide evidence to support your view. Now scroll down three more paragraphs to find the passage that begins "They challenged [us] to combat and barred the pass..."

3. What are five words not used in this excerpt which describe the courage of the Latins?

4. What is one reason that this eyewitness might have had for seeing the Latins as courageous?

Now find the section titled "The Surrender of Jerusalem" and read the first two paragraphs there.

5. Why did Salah al-Din become so angry about the Latins counterattacking his forces? From a Muslim viewpoint, what tactic do you think the Latins might have been trying to use when they sent Balian outside the city to hold negotiations with Salah al-Din?

6. Do you believe Balian and the Christians were good negotiators? Explain.

7. In the first paragraph of the "Surrender of Jerusalem" section, what does the phrase "dying honourably in defence of the city" reveal about the Latins?

Now find the passage that begins "The Latin women in the city placed tubs in front of Mount Calvary..." (in the third paragraph).

8. What was the "shame" of the young girls of Jerusalem? How can we tell this from the passage?

9. What were Jerusalem's residents trying to accomplish with regard to the "true cross"?
10. Explain why the old men "locked themselves in their homes."

Now find the passage that begins "If we interpret the treaty [now] against their interest...". The passage is in the twelfth paragraph down from the main heading.

11. Why does Salah al-Din say that the Muslims will honor the treaty (covenant)? What does this tell you about him?

Find the sentence that begins "who could not endure the sufferng [sic] of the refugees..."

12. What might have motivated the Muslims to help the less fortunate refugees?

Now, find the section titled "The Fate of the Native Christians."

13. In your own words, summarize the arguments over what people thought should become of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

14. Write a paragraph about the ways in which these Muslim accounts of the capture of Jerusalem agree or disagree with the Christian account that you read in Part I of this lesson. You should also discuss why you think the accounts agree or disagree, and support your position by providing examples from the primary sources you've read in this lesson.