

Why did the Pope send the Crusades?

Read the (imaginary!) exchange of messages between Pope Urban II and the Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Komnenos and complete the following tasks:

1. How would you describe the relationship between Alexios I and Pope Urban?
2. Looking on a map, identify the areas that Alexios mentions in his messages.
3. Explain at least two different reasons why Pope Urban II was willing to send help to Alexios I.

1088 From Emperor Alexios I Komnenos to Pope Urban II

Warm greetings from Byzantium!
Messengers have told me that you have been chosen to be the new Pope of Rome and head of the Christian Church in Western Europe. I send you my warm greetings and best wishes.

1089 From Pope Urban II to Emperor Alexios I Komnenos

Greetings from Rome!
I received your message gladly and have wasted no time in writing back. I want to take this opportunity to remind you that my half of the Christian Church is much holier than yours because St Peter and St Paul brought Christianity to Rome and I am a direct spiritual descendent from St Peter.

1088 From Emperor Alexios I Komnenos to Pope Urban II

From Byzantium!
I received your message and have wasted no time in writing back to remind you that it is the Byzantine Christian Church which is the true heir to the earliest Christian Church. You might have established yourself in the heartland of the old Roman Empire but our Byzantine Church and Empire is the older and the best. Don't forget that more Christians belong to our church than to yours so we are more important than you.

1088 From Pope Urban II to Emperor Alexios I Komnenos

I politely acknowledge your message.

1088 From Emperor Alexios I Komnenos to Pope Urban II

I am too busy defending my empire from a Turkish invasion to find time to write back to you.

1089 From Pope Urban II to Emperor Alexios I Komnenos

Do let me know how you get on.

1090 From Emperor Alexios I Komnenos to Pope Urban II

It's been pretty bad here - no sooner do I fight off one with invader than another arrives! I've just managed to make an alliance with 40,000 Hungarian soldiers who are going to help me.

1089 From Pope Urban II to Emperor Alexios I Komnenos

It does sound awful. Hope you survive!

1094 From Emperor Alexios I Komnenos to Pope Urban II

You will not believe it but no sooner had the Hungarians helped me beat the Pecheneg Turks than they turned on me and attacked my Empire! I have only just defeated them. I am feeling pretty worn out.

1094 From Pope Urban II to Emperor Alexios I Komnenos

Do let me know if I can help you at all.

1095 From Emperor Alexios I Komnenos to Pope Urban II

Shortly after I beat the Hungarians, I had another invasion to deal with this. A massive army of Seljuk Turks have over-run all our territories to the East. I would be very grateful indeed if you could send me a small number of well-trained soldiers. I will pay them properly and it would be very handy to have some fresh fighters.

1095 From Pope Urban II to Emperor Alexios I Komnenos

No problem at all. I will not just send you a few soldiers: no, the whole of Western Christendom will come to your help. (Perhaps when you see how strong and mighty we are, you will realise that my half of the Christian Church is better than yours!)