**Peter Frankopan’s ‘The Silk Roads’. Chapter 7 – The Road to Heaven.**

**Challenge:** Read through the part of the chapter on the first Crusade and answer the questions.

Then, in 1095, something extraordinary happened. Upheaval in the **Muslim world** resulted in **Turks** not only taking control of **Baghdad** but expanding westwards almost as far as the walls of **Constantinople** itself. For the **Byzantine emperor, Alexios Komnenos**, it was the final straw: his empire was already on the ropes with an economy in real trouble and under pressure from neighbours elsewhere too. He reached out to **Pope Urban II** for military help, hoping that a large number of knights would journey to aid his recovery of some of the biggest cities in **Asia Minor** (an area covering most of what is now **Turkey**) that had recently been lost.

Why did the Byzantine emperor reach out to Pope Urban II?

The Pope leaped at the chance. He knew that the **Christian empire in the East** was in serious trouble and needed help; he also realised that a successful expedition could assist in mending fences within **Europe** itself, where there were serious divisions amongst the Christian faithful which led to the Pope being challenged by Kings and even by other senior priests. Uniting against an outside enemy could stop them arguing amongst themselves. Pope Urban begged, encouraged and even bullied knights to set out in his campaign – the start of the famous crusades. And **Jerusalem** was the prize. Not everyone was impressed: **Roger of Sicily**, who ruled over many Muslims as well as Christians and Jews, refused to go – and apparently ‘raised his leg to let out a loud fart’ to show the Pope what he thought of the plans.

Why did Pope Urban leap at the chance?

How did the Pope try and get knights in western Europe to go on a crusade?

Where were they going to invade?

But many did respond. Incredibly, against extraordinary odds and despite several close shaves with disaster, those who took part in the **First Crusade** successfully fought their way across thousands of miles, and in the summer of 1099 reached the **Holy City**.

The assault began on 15 July. **Raimbold of Cretons**, a young knight from the Chartres in **France**, was the first to reach the top of the city walls. Defenders were waiting for him, and in the one clean blow, chopped off his arm. But the attackers broke through and set about butchering the inhabitants. Jerusalem was soon filled with dead bodies piled up ‘on mounds as big as houses outside the city gates,’ as one author put it. ‘If you had been there,’ wrote another a few years later, ‘your feet would have been stained to the ankles with the blood of the slain. No one was left alive. Neither women nor children were spared.’ It was not just **Muslims** who were killed; **Jews** had been targeted by the **Crusaders** too as they crossed Europe, with Jewish communities subjected to appalling violence. Anyone and everyone in Jerusalem was a target: the **Christian knights** saw their success as a chance to avenge the killing of Jesus centuries before – as well as to get revenge for their friends who had not made it.

Find 3 shocking facts about the assault on Jerusalem.

The slaughter eventually came to an end as it began to dawn on the leaders that, although they had reached their goal, they now had to work out what would happen next. The Crusaders realised that holding their gains in the Holy Land would not be easy. The question was whether they would be able to do so – and whether it was worth it.

Once the Crusaders had taken Jerusalem, what was their next challenge?