

History of the Crusades.  
Episode 164.  
The Crusade Against the Cathars.  
Post Mortem.

Hello again. Last week we saw the death of the leader of the Crusade, Simon de Montfort, at the siege of Toulouse. Simon's eighteen year old son Amaury was appointed as Simon's replacement. But the siege was lifted a few weeks later and the Crusaders withdrew back to Carcassonne, leaving the Toulousans in full control of their city.

Now, what the Crusaders want to know, what the rebels want to know, and what we want to know is, is this the end of the Crusade? The answer is: No - although the death of Simon de Montfort pretty much did signal with the beginning of the end of the Crusade. Simon's death and the failure of the Crusaders to retake the city of Toulouse from the rebels was a watershed moment for both sides of the conflict, and the resulting seismic shift in the Crusade against the Cathars was massive.

A parallel generational shift also seems to happen at this time. Obviously, the mantle of the leader of the Crusade is taken up by Simon's eighteen year old son Amaury, while the now twenty one year old young Raymond steps into the limelight, assuming the role once held by his father Raymond VI, who now, no doubt with a huge sigh of relief, takes a back seat in the war. Likewise, the sons of the Counts of Foix and Comminges step forward and also take a much more active role. Just to complete the generational shift, Prince Louis will represent the Kingdom of France for the remainder of the conflict.

So, let's start by taking a look at the state of play in the Crusader camp following the death of Simon de Montfort. For all intents and purposes, the Crusade against the Cathars was all about one man, Simon de Montfort. Simon had single-handedly led the conflict for so long that he was the face of the Crusade, the driver of the Crusade, and the main benefactor of the Crusade. For the men of the Church across Languedoc, men who were faithful to Simon de Montfort to an almost baffling degree, the extent of his victories, and the fact that he had risen to conquer and rule most of southern France, was a sign of divine favour, and an indication that Simon was a true soldier of Christ to whom they should pledge their undying allegiance. His unexpected death pulled the rug out from under many of the faithful. For them, this was not how the story was meant to end. Simon was supposed to vanquish the unfaithful, obliterate heresy from southern France, and restore Languedoc to the Catholic faith under the joint rule of himself and the Papacy. Surely that was God's plan. Simon's death seems to have affected many of the faithful like it affected Peter the Monk. Peter just seems to lose interest in both the Crusade against the Cathars and in his "Historia Albigensis" following Simon's death. His narrative stumbles on for a few uninteresting more pages, and then just stops.

Likewise, young Amaury de Montfort found many Crusaders just threw in the towel and returned home after Simon's death, and those who remained were starting to form their own ideas about the future of the conflict. Many northern Frenchmen had staked their fortunes on being part of Simon de Montfort's post-Crusade southern France. With the rebel cause on the ascendancy, and with the Crusade disintegrating around them, Crusader knights and lords were starting to hedge their bets and form their own opinions of what needed to happen. While young Amaury may well have been a competent military commander, he simply didn't possess the powerful personality of his father. Maintaining discipline and loyalty amongst the Crusader army was going to be one of the many

challenges facing him moving forward. His most immediate problem though, was lack of men. To prevent the rebels from building on their momentum following the siege of Toulouse and regaining all the territory they had lost to the Crusaders, Amaury needed more men, and he needed them quickly. He wrote a letter to Pope Honorius, advising him of his father's death and imploring him to send more volunteers his way.

Then a delegation of Church hierarchy were dispatched to northern France, along with Simon's widow and Amaury's mother, Alice. Their mission was to convince the King of France to lend military support to the Crusade and to preach the Crusade once again to the people of northern France, in an attempt to gain some much needed Crusade of volunteers. In early August of 1218, the Bishops of Toulouse, Tarbes and Comminges, along with Alice, arrived at the Royal court in Paris, but were disappointed to find Philip Augustus as reluctant to get involved in the Crusade as he had been from the beginning. King Philip II allowed himself to be persuaded to permit his vassals to lend their support to the conflict if they wished to do so, but that was as far as he would go.

Pope Honorius wrote a flurry of letters in an attempt to reboot the Crusade as soon as news of Simon's death reached Rome. Realizing that the military involvement of the French crown was critical to the success of the venture, on the 12th of August he wrote to Philip Augustus urging him to send Prince Louis and the French army into southern France. He also wrote a separate letter to Prince Louis himself, urging the same. However, neither letter had the desired effect. Prince Louis had just returned from an unsuccessful military campaign in England, and he was reluctant to embark on another major expedition. It was looking like the Crusade will be forced to limp on with only volunteers to bolster its forces, and when further letters written to the King of France and Prince Louis by Pope Honorius in early September failed to motivate the French crown, things were looking bleak for the Crusader cause. Until the Papal Legate Bertrand forced King Philip's hand in a very savvy political maneuver.

According to Jonathan Sumption in his book "The Albigensian Crusade", Bertrand offered the leadership of the northern French expedition to Thibaut IV, the Count of Champagne. Thibaut IV was a rising star amongst the nobility of northern France. Only seventeen years old, competent and extremely ambitious, Thibaut was not only the Count of the vast and wealthy Champagne region in the eastern part of northern France, he was also, via his mother, heir to the kingdom of Navarre in Spain. Should he manage to add southern France to his already impressive portfolio of territories, he would be much too powerful for his own good. Of course, the only way to definitely stop this from happening was for the Kingdom of France itself to lead the expedition.

So Philip Augustus ordered Prince Louis to take the Cross once again and head down to southern France on Crusade. According to Jonathan Sumption, Prince Louis had completely lost his former motivation for Crusading, and the order sent him into a prolonged sulk. He reluctantly announced in November of 1218 his intention to join the Crusade, but in a blow to Amaury de Montfort, fixed his departure date for Ascension Day, which fell in spring the following year, leaving Amaury to hold his own in Languedoc for the winter.

This, of course, was disastrous for Amaury. The death of his father and the success of the rebels in the siege of Toulouse sparked off rebellions across Languedoc, and already some major towns, including Nimes and Castelnaudary, had declared for the Raymonds and thrown out their northern French occupiers. Some routiers were able to regain their

ancestral homes, and across southern France, the rebellion was reaching fever pitch. Immediately following the siege of Toulouse, young Raymond had begun campaigning in the Agenais, with spectacular success, and by the beginning of winter, towards the end of the year 1218, he had reclaimed most of the Agen region.

Now, while we're talking about young Raymond, you might be scratching your heads and wondering how on earth the son of Raymond VI could be so successful in his military endeavors. But of course, we shouldn't forget the fact that Young Raymond's mother was the late Joanna, making him grandson to Eleanor of Aquitaine and nephew of Richard the Lionheart. It also makes him nephew to King John of England, but I think we'll ignore that particular twig on the family tree. So I think we can safely attribute young Raymond's military prowess to the traits he inherited from his mother's Plantagenet line. It also didn't hurt that he was young, charismatic, most likely good looking, and was the celebrated sole rebel victor against Simon de Montfort. So as young Raymond swept through the Agenais, his superstar status and his hype as a shining star in the rebel galaxy made his success in the region all but assured.

Back down south, near the Pyrenees, the Count of Comminges was enjoying some military success of his own. Simon de Montfort had allocated lands in the County of Comminges to one of his loyal lieutenants called Joris. This may have been the same Joris who had confronted the rebel army on its march towards the city of Toulouse back in Episode 160, but I've been unable to find solid confirmation of this. Anyway, the Count of Comminges decided he wanted his lands back, so he embarked on what must have been a strange military campaign, invading his own County in order to boot Joris out. Joris initially put up some stiff resistance, aided at first by Amaury and the remnants of the Crusader army. He besieged a small town in Comminges, and after defeating it, he put its entire population to the sword. However, Amaury then left to march to the Agenais, leaving Joris with a small army that was all but wiped out when confronted by the Count of Comminges, the army of Comminges, and the angry inhabitants of Comminges. Joris was captured and the Count of Comminges found himself once again ruling his restored County.

Amaury de Montfort had left Joris so he could go and win back the Agenais from young Raymond. However, he made the rookie error of dividing his army into small units, believing that to be the best way of conquering a large swathe of territory. Of course, this made it easy for the Crusaders to be repelled, with the result that Amaury's Agen campaign was not going at all well.

It was around this time that Amaury began facing some serious disciplinary problems. In his book "The Albigensian Crusade", Jonathan Sumption reports that some of the Crusader army's most experienced leaders now decided to split from the main army and go off on adventures of their own, and many soldiers from the army decided to join them. Amaury was powerless to stop them. Intent on forging small fiefdoms of their own, these groups of Crusaders became roaming bands of outlaws who plundered and murdered at will, making the lives of many citizens within the County of Toulouse an absolute misery.

In December of 1218, Amaury decided to besiege a small town in the Agen, the town of Marmande. However, with all the desertions and losses from the Crusader army, he didn't have enough men to properly surround the town. As a consequence, the siege was progressing pretty badly, and he was desperate for more men. More specifically, he was desperate for more men from Prince Louis's army. However, news from Paris was that

Prince Louis' preparations were going slowly, and he was still not intending to mobilize until Ascension Day, in May 1219.

The departure of the army of the Kingdom of France was also on young Raymond's mind at this time. He had sent an embassy to Paris to plead with Philip Augustus to cancel Prince Louis' Crusade, and to instead reinstall his father Raymond VI as the Count of Toulouse. According to Jonathan Sumption, King Philip was very nearly persuaded by young Raymond's representatives and may even have seriously considered restoring the Raymonds to their lands. However, a timely and stern letter from Pope Honorius put an end to his deliberations, and Prince Louis' preparations continued. Finally, on the 16th of May 1219, Prince Louis' expedition left Paris and journeyed southwards, intending to join up with Amaury's Crusaders.

Where were Amaury's Crusaders? Well, they were still besieging Marmande. Six months had passed, but Amaury's army was still no closer to taking the town. Prince Louis amused himself by stopping off at La Rochelle, the port city belonging to the English crown on the west coast of southern France, and taking it from the English. Then he headed to Marmande, arriving there in early June. There are, of course, conflicting estimations of how large Prince Louis' army was, but it's safe to say it was pretty big. It definitely included at least 20 bishops and 33 northern French counts, each with their own contingents of knights, soldiers and retainers. They were also a mixture of Cistercian and Benedictine clergymen, and noblemen from Germany and Flanders. When you added to this a bunch of volunteer crusaders, the army would have been rather large, although it probably didn't contain the hundreds of thousands of fighters estimated by the anonymous troubadour.

The army was, however, definitely big enough to completely surround Marmande, and to frighten its citizens into offering to surrender. The lord of the town, the Count of Astarac, surrendered to Prince Louis, as did the garrison of the town. The Bishop of Saintes then piped up and argued that the Count should be executed as a traitor, along with every single person inside Marmande. Despite the fact that there were no heretics of any kind within the town, the Count had apparently once been a Crusader, and his defiance led some of the senior clergy to support his execution, either by hanging as a traitor or by burning as a heretic. Concerned noblemen from Princess Louis' army then pointed out that men of noble birth shouldn't be treated that way, and in the end a compromise was reached. The Count would be spared, along with four other men of noble birth from inside the town. But everyone else must die.

Every man, woman and child inside Marmande was then put to the sword. Now this slaughter hasn't gained the notoriety of the massacre at Beziers, but it was on a similar scale. In his book, "The Occitan War", Laurence Marvin points out that a northern French chronicler, one William the Breton, who tended to be as biased towards the French crown as Peter the Monk was towards Simon de Montfort, estimated that 5,000 citizens were killed at Marmande in 1219, placing it amongst the worst atrocities committed during the Crusade against the Cathars.

With Marmande out of the way, the combined Crusader and Royal French army marched to their next target, the city of Toulouse. Now the Toulousans had had ample time to prepare their defenses, and they had used their time well. The walls and defensive structures had been strengthened and improved, and young Raymond had been busy within the city, preparing and expanding its garrison. When the French army showed up, they were unable to breach the walls, although due to their extensive numbers, they were

able to surround the city completely, something that Simon de Montfort had never been able to achieve.

The third siege of Toulouse lasted six weeks. At the end of the six weeks, Prince Louis burned all his siege engines, packed up his camp, released his prisoners, and headed back to Paris. The astonished Toulousans could hardly believe their luck. Everyone was aghast at this turn of events, and the chroniclers at the time had a field day trying to come up with explanations for it. But the most likely reason for Prince Louis' abrupt departure is that he had had enough. His forty days of Crusader service had expired, he had obeyed his father, and done his duty to the Church, and now he wanted to return to Paris. Return he did, and that was the end of that.

So is this then the end of the Crusade? Nope, it's still going. Join me next week as we continue on our merry way. Until next week, bye for now.

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