

History of the Crusades.
Episode 21.
The Crusader States: The Kingdom of Jerusalem.

Hello again. The last two episodes have examined the newly formed Crusader states the Principality of Antioch and the Counties of Edessa and Tripoli. This week we will look at the remaining Crusader state, the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

Now, just before I start, a word about the map to which I referred you last week. It shows the Crusader states, their borders all neatly and definitively drawn, giving the impression that all the land within the borders were solid Latin Christian territory. Well, that's actually a bit misleading. In actuality, the borders were hazy, and shifted and changed regularly, and the land with the Crusader states was often not fully under the control of the Latin Christians. This was particularly the case with the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

When Baldwin I took up the crown on Christmas Day in the year 1100, the Kingdom of Jerusalem was in reality just a collection of isolated Latin Christian outposts, surrounded and way outnumbered by the established settlements of local Muslim, Jewish, and Eastern Christian people. The coastal towns in the Kingdom, in particular, were mainly Muslim, which caused all sorts of problems. To survive, the Kingdom needed secure ports from which they could safely receive communication and supplies from Europe, and from which pilgrims could disembark before traveling to Jerusalem and perhaps even settling in the new territory.

At the start of his reign, Baldwin I only held two ports in his Kingdom, Jaffa and Haifa, neither of which had particularly good harbors. And the road between Jaffa and Jerusalem was dangerous, with pilgrims at the mercy of Islamic raiding parties. The corpses of fallen pilgrims lay scattered on the roadside, as it was too unsafe to collect and bury them. It was not an ideal first impression for Christian visitors to the Holy Lands. From his brother Godfrey, Baldwin inherited a Kingdom that was dominated by the Church and by religious considerations. But Baldwin himself was not particularly religious. He was, on the whole, a pragmatic, ambitious military man, and from the outset he recognized that the Kingdom of Jerusalem could not survive on piety alone.

Jerusalem's main threat came from the Egyptians to the south, while Damascus menaced the Latin Christian territory to the north east. King Baldwin decided that a policy of military aggression was called for. His reign was characterized by attacks on Muslim strongholds within his Kingdom and outside his borders, and dogged defense against incursions by Muslim forces.

Early in his reign, King Baldwin realized that for the Kingdom to survive, it was vital that it seized control of key ports along its coastline. In May 1101, five months into his reign, King Baldwin I decided to take the coastal town of Caesarea.

Caesarea was founded by Herod the Great as a Roman capital for the Kingdom of Palestine in the year 30 BC. Herod named the city after the Roman Emperor of the time, Caesar Octavian, who would later become the Emperor Augustus. Herod designed the city carefully, laying out the streets in a grid pattern for its citizens, and installing a hippodrome, a temple, amphitheatres, and an aqueduct, to complement the palace he built for himself. A defensive wall was built enclosing the city, and a further Byzantine wall was erected

some centuries later. Caesarea was a very Roman city, and when the Romans left the Middle East it fell into decline. Its population dwindled, and its impressive buildings and fortifications were left to decay. By the time of the Crusades, many of its buildings were in disrepair, and its once impressive port had become just a shallow harbor.

Still, Baldwin decided that it needed to be taken. Not only did it need to be conquered, it needed to be subdued in a way that would send a message to other Muslim strongholds within the Kingdom. Baldwin's forces surrounded the city, and he sent a delegation to the Emir of the town, urging him to surrender. The Emir refused, and Baldwin's forces went on the attack, pummeling the city mercilessly with catapults. After fifteen days, the Latin Christians overcame the city's defenses, and using scaling ladders, they forced their way into Caesarea. Wishing to teach the defiant Muslims a lesson, King Baldwin gave permission for his soldiers to kill and plunder without restraint, and that's exactly what they did. Many of the town's citizens fled to the town's mosque, but Baldwin's troops broke into the mosque and killed them, until the floor was awash with blood. In the end, only a few girls and infants remained alive, out of all of the citizens of Caesarea. The Emir himself was seized and ransomed.

The plunder that the soldiers were able to take from Caesarea made many of them wealthy men, and filled the coffers of Jerusalem's treasury. Importantly, the sack of Caesarea sent a message to other Muslim strongholds within the Kingdom: Defy Jerusalem, and you will be annihilated.

A few years later, Baldwin turned his attention to what would be one of the key cities in the Crusader states, the port of Acre. By then, the Muslim leaders had learned their lesson. Using a Genoese fleet, Baldwin blockaded the port and laid siege to the city. The city waited for assistance from Egypt, but after twenty days they gave up waiting and negotiated terms of surrender with the Latin Christians. King Baldwin agreed to let any citizens who wish to do so leave the city with their belongings. This was too much for some of the Genoese sailors who, seeing the citizens depart, attacked and robbed them. King Baldwin intervened, and the city fell into his hands. Finally, he had what he had so desperately needed: a working harbor which was safe in all weathers.

Acre quickly became the chief port of the Kingdom, despite the fact that it was more than 100 miles from Jerusalem, and eventually it would become the main port for communication and trade between the Crusader states and Latin Christendom.

Slowly then, King Baldwin began to subdue and consolidate his Kingdom. He worked hard behind the scenes to keep the ambitions of the Church contained, and to control the nobility, granting land and favors selectively and carefully. He acted aggressively towards his Muslim neighbours, leading sorties into Egyptian territory across the Kingdom's borders to the southwest, and into the inhospitable and sparsely populated area across the river Jordan, known as Transjordan, to the east.

All in all, given the resources of the New Kingdom and the challenges he faced, you'd have to concede that Baldwin did a pretty good job as the first Latin King of Jerusalem. But the stresses of his new role and the accumulated injuries he had acquired in various battles over the years finally caught up with him. In the winter of 1116 he became sick. He spent most of the year convalescing, and by 1118 felt well enough to embark on an ambitious military campaign against the Egyptians. He led a raid deep into Egyptian territory, traveling as far as the eastern branches of the River Nile. However, once there his illness

returned, and one of his old wounds began troubling him, leaving him in severe pain and unable to ride his horse. On the second of April 1118 he confessed his sins and died.

Following his directions, his body was prepared for its journey back to Jerusalem. His internal organs were removed, and his body, eyes, mouth, nose, and ears were packed with salt to prevent his corpse rotting in the desert heat. He was rolled up in hides and carpets and tied to a horse for his journey home. He was buried in Jerusalem beside his brother Godfrey de Bouillon.

Just as an aside, some four months later on the 15th of August 1118, the Emperor Alexius also died, after a long and painful illness, and his son, Emperor John II, took up the Imperial Purple.

But back to Jerusalem. Baldwin I hadn't named a successor, but an obvious one was quickly chosen. Count Baldwin II of Edessa was King Baldwin I's cousin, and had proven himself a competent ruler in the Middle East. Although they were related and bore the same name, the two Baldwins were quite different to each other. King Baldwin II was much more approachable than his predecessor. He enjoyed the odd joke and was subtle and considered in his decisions. Unlike Baldwin I, Baldwin II was a pious man, so much so that his knees were said to have developed callouses from his praying so often. Also, unlike Baldwin I, Baldwin II was happily married. Baldwin I had tended to marry purely for political and financial gain, which resulted in a couple of unhappy unions, whereas Baldwin II was clearly devoted to his Armenian wife, Morphia and his four little daughters.

The two Baldwins were similar in their energetic devotion to the continued existence of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and of the Crusader states. Baldwin II ably continued where Baldwin I had left off, keeping the nobility and the Church in check, keeping an eye on threats from Egypt and Damascus and doing his best to shore up the other Crusading states. It wasn't all smooth sailing. The period of destabilization after the disastrous Latin Christian defeat at the Field of Blood proved a challenge, and Baldwin II was in fact taken prisoner, and was held captive by Muslim forces for sixteen months before being ransomed. But there were also some good times. Baldwin II managed to conquer the city of Tyre in 1124, one of the last Muslim strongholds in the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

And unlike his predecessor, Baldwin II was able to spend some time making plans for his succession. He was the father of four daughters, and in the absence of any sons, it was clear that whomever his oldest daughter, Melisende, was to marry was going to have to be very well chosen. Always keen to get influential Europeans to move to the Middle East and to forge strong ties with Latin Christendom, Baldwin looked to Europe to supply a suitable husband for his daughter. He sent representatives to France to meet with King Louis VI, to request the King to choose a suitable husband from the French nobility for Melisende. King Louis put forward the name, the Count of Anjou, Fulk V.

Fulk was a widower around 40 years of age and the head of one of the wealthiest and most prestigious houses of France. He even had ties with the Holy Land. He had traveled to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage in 1120 had already met Baldwin, Melisende's father. The proposed alliance was endorsed by the Pope, and Baldwin readily accepted the match. In 1129 Fulk left France and traveled to Jerusalem. One month after his arrival in the Holy City he married Melisende. The union was celebrated throughout the Holy Land, although there may have been one person not quite so keen on the alliance, Melisende herself. Although there is no record of her feelings on the matter, the slender, dark haired young

woman of perhaps 19 years of age may have been a little disappointed with her short, redhead, middle-aged husband. But happy or not, the marriage produced a son, unsurprisingly named Baldwin, and Fulk immersed himself in the day-to-day affairs of his new home, providing welcome military expertise and assistance to his father-in-law, King Baldwin II.

After Melisende and Fulk had been married for three years, they were summoned by King Baldwin to his bedchamber, not at the Royal Palace in the Temple of Solomon, but in the Patriarch's apartments within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It was August 1131 and King Baldwin had become seriously ill, after returning from quashing a rebellion in northern Syria. He realized his last days were at hand. He requested to be carried from the Royal Palace to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where, in front of witnesses, he called Fulk and Melisende to his bedside.

Now, over the past three years, King Baldwin had come to know his son-in-law Fulk pretty well. An able military commander and devoted to his young wife, Fulk had one big disadvantage. He just wasn't very likable. To start with, being short and red-haired, he wasn't very pleasing to the eye. And he also had a very annoying habit of forgetting people's names and faces. Whether this was a deliberate act, as the result of some strange personality quirk, or whether he genuinely couldn't remember people, the habit apparently even extended to members of his own household and his close associates. Fulk would either pretend that he didn't know them, or perhaps would genuinely forget who they were, despite the fact that he spent quite a bit of time with them. In the political scene of the Crusader states, where personal alliances and connections were so important, this was quite a handicap. It's possible too that Fulk wished to somehow eventually annex Jerusalem to his extensive lands in France and that King Baldwin had some concerns about this.

But whatever the reason, on his deathbed, in front of witnesses, King Baldwin made a surprising announcement. He didn't name Fulk as his heir, he named all three members of Fulk's family as joint heirs: Fulk, Melisende and their infant son, Baldwin.

This was very unexpected in an age where women in positions of power were rare. Joint rule between a husband and wife was bound to cause some problems. It would have been a different story if Melisende was the sort of wife who was happy to sit back and defer to her husband. But Melisende wasn't that sort of wife, and her father would have known that. Baldwin's daughters were rather feisty and headstrong.

His second daughter, Alice, was married to Bohemond II, Bohemond's Italian son, who had traveled to the Holy Lands as soon as he came of age, to become the Prince of Antioch. Alice and Bohemond had a daughter, Princess Constance, and when Bohemond II was killed in battle in 1130, Alice immediately declared herself Regent, without waiting for a pronouncement from King Baldwin. Alice was desperate to rule Antioch in her own right. Her daughter, Princess Constance, was only two years of age, and rumors circulated that Alice was planning to have her admitted to a convent.

To secure her position, Alice sent an envoy to the most powerful Islamic ruler at the time, Imad ad-Din Zengi, offering to pay homage to him if he guaranteed her the rule of Antioch. Luckily, King Baldwin and his men were on their way to Antioch, and they captured the envoy before it could pass on its message. When the King arrived at Antioch, his daughter Alice shut Antioch's gates on him and refused to allow him into the city. She didn't really

have the support of Antioch's nobility in these exploits, and the next day they secretly opened the gates and allowed the King to enter. Alice barricaded herself in a tower and refused to come out. Eventually, her father persuaded her to face the music, and she found herself banished to Lattakiah, which was a pretty light punishment. Her father assumed Regency of Antioch and appointed Joscelin of Edessa as Guardian of Antioch and of the Princess Constance.

As King Baldwin was lying on his deathbed in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, these events must have been fresh in his mind. They only happened a year ago, and yet here he was, deliberately elevating his eldest daughter to a position of power which may bring her in conflict with her husband.

It must have been a shock too for Fulk. Understandably, he assumed that he would be King of Jerusalem after Baldwin's death, and would be ruling in his own right. But it was not to be. On the 14th of September 1131, three weeks after King Baldwin I had died and been buried in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, King Fulk and Queen Melisende were crowned as joint sovereigns, in a lavish ceremony also held in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The start of their reign was beset by drama. While the nobility of Jerusalem accepted King Fulk, the leaders of the other Crusader states were less willing to do so. While they had accepted King Baldwin as their overlord, they were reluctant to extend the same support to his son-in-law. To make matters worse, Count Joscelin I of Edessa died only a month after King Baldwin. Alice, from her exile in Lattakiah, decided this would be a great opportunity to reassert her claim as Regent of Antioch. The nobility of Antioch weren't very impressed with Joscelin's heir, his son Joscelin II, who was unattractive both in personality and looks. A short, dark-haired, heavily-built man with a pockmarked face, Joscelin II had a reputation for being lazy and prone to luxury and excess, with no talent for administration or military leadership. With key figures in Antioch feeling a level of disquiet over Joscelin II, Alice sought the support of Pons, of the County of Tripoli, to throw off the mantle of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and allow the Crusader states to rule themselves without overlordship from Jerusalem. Both Pons and Joscelin II could see the advantages of this, so Alice left Lattakiah and headed north, back to Antioch, to assume the Regency on behalf of her infant daughter, Constance. Some of the nobles in Antioch supported Alice, but many didn't. King Fulk was informed of the situation and headed north with his army. Pons of Tripoli refused to let the King cross into the County of Tripoli, so Fulk had to transport his army by ship from Beirut to the port of St Symeon.

The King went on to defeat the rebel armies, but was very light in the punishment he meted out. Alice was sent back to Lattakiah, while he seems to have accepted apologies from Pons of Tripoli and Joscelin II Edessa.

It's unclear why Fulk didn't approach the rebels with a firmer hand. Perhaps he was lenient at the urgings of Queen Melisende. Or perhaps he had forgotten who they were. Or perhaps he was distracted by his domestic troubles. King Fulk was having a rocky start to his reign. In the midst of quashing internal rebellions and defending the Crusader states against Muslim incursions, he was having some marital problems.

Queen Melisende was not happy. Fulk had begun his reign as if he were the sole sovereign of Jerusalem. Queen Melisende was sidelined, and she wasn't included in his decision making processes. To make matters worse, she had befriended Hugh II, Lord of

Jaffa. Like her, Hugh was young and in a position of power in the Holy Land. Also like her, he was married to someone for whom he cared little, a wealthy widow who was much older than him. Hugh was tall, slender, young, and good-looking, the exact opposite of King Fulk.

Of course, rumors started to circulate about the friendship, and Hugh was eventually accused of plotting against the King. He was sent into exile, but not before he was stabbed, nearly fatally, while playing cards in Jerusalem. Of course, the King was rumored to be behind the attempted murder, but the perpetrator swore he acted alone. Before he was executed, the perpetrator had his limbs cut off one by one. After this occurred, he repeated his statement that he had not been acting on the King's orders. He was believed and then killed. The King was exonerated, and Hugh left for Sicily, where he died not long after he arrived.

King Fulk was desperate to regain his wife's favor and support. A distinct rift had appeared amongst the nobility in Jerusalem. Those whom King Fulk had elevated to power, many of them imported from his family lands back in France, clearly supported the King, while most native-born nobles supported the Queen. The Queen's supporters wished the King to rule jointly with his wife, and after a further period of domestic conflict, the King agreed. From that time on, Queen Melisende inserted herself into state affairs, and went on to play a central role in governing the Kingdom.

Just as an aside, in the British Library is a beautiful little prayer book from the Crusading era. Bound by highly decorated ivory covers, and illustrated with styles influenced by Latin, Greek, Byzantine, and even Muslim traditions, it is thought to have been presented by King Fulk to Queen Melisende as a peace offering during this difficult time in their marriage.

Queen Melisende was pious, and during her reign she financed the building and restoration of many churches, the most important being the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre you can visit today is pretty much, in a structural sense at least, the church reconstructed by Queen Melisende.

In 1143, the King and Queen were out riding near Acre. The King spied a hare and gave chase. His mount stumbled and King Fulk was thrown from his horse. Unconscious and bleeding from his nose and ears, the King was carried back to Jerusalem, where he died on the 10th of November 1143. He was buried in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, at the foot of Mount Calvary, next to Godfrey de Bouillon, King Baldwin I, and King Baldwin II. Queen Melisende was left to rule alone, as Regent for her young son, Baldwin III, a task which she performed ably.

For those of you who are interested in the outcome of Queen Melisende's sister Alice's bid for the Regency of Antioch, it has rather an entertaining conclusion. Back in the mid-1130's, King Fulk decided that the now nine-year-old Princess Constance needed to be married, to put an end once and for all to Alice's claims. He eventually chose a suitable husband from Europe, the youngest son of Duke William IX of Aquitaine, Raymond of Poitiers. Raymond made his way to Antioch, but his arrival was disclosed to Alice. Alice was then told that Raymond had come to seek her hand in marriage. As Raymond was 37 years old and Alice not yet 30, this seemed very plausible. However, as Alice was waiting in her apartments to meet her suitor, Raymond was rushed off to the cathedral, where he

was hastily married to Alice's daughter Constance, thereby becoming the undisputed ruler of Antioch.

Now that we have concluded our look at the Crusader states, one thing should be apparent to you all. The issue that has dogged the states right from the beginning is the lack of manpower. Having taken territory in the Holy Land, surrounded on all sides by hostile forces, the Crusader states could really do with their own army of trained soldiers. And not just any army, mind, an army of religious warriors. Join me next week as we take a look at the establishment of the famous Knights Templar.

Back in Episode two, I posted a link on the website to a 360 degree tour of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It's an excellent tour, and I recommend you grab a cup of coffee, click on the link and take the tour. It shows you the Church of the Holy Sepulchre today, a church that is structurally the same as it was at the time of Queen Melisende. To access the tour, go to HistoryOfTheCrusades.webs.com, scroll down to Episode 2 and click on the link provided. I've also posted a photo of a page from the prayer book kept at the British Library on the website, so you can check that out while you are there. And in breaking news, the History of the Crusades now has its own Twitter feed. Listener Stephen said that he didn't understand why the podcast didn't have a Twitter account. When I thought about it, I didn't understand why either, so I've created one. If you have a Twitter account, you can follow [@HistoryCrusades](https://twitter.com/HistoryCrusades), for updates about episodes and just general Crusading stuff. Again, that's [@HistoryCrusades](https://twitter.com/HistoryCrusades). I shall try and post a link to the feed from the website. Until next week, bye for now.

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