

History of the Crusades.
Episode 31.
The Second Crusade III.

Hello again. Last week we saw things end disastrously for the Latin Christians in the Holy Land. The fearsome Islamic warrior Zengi had taken one of the main cities in the Crusader states, Edessa. Zengi died not long after the conquest, but his death was of little comfort to the Latin Christians. One of his sons, Nur ad-Din, established his base in Aleppo and proceeded to rule over his father's lands in Syria. His older brother, Said ad-Din Ghazi, set himself up in Mosul and ruled over Iraq. While this meant that Zengi's empire was split in two, this wasn't good news for the Crusader states.

Whereas Zengi's main goal had been to take Damascus and secure his rule over the Islamic heartland, Nur ad-Din, with his capital Aleppo so close to the coast, had his sights set on the occupied Christian territories. His first goal was to take land from the principality of Antioch, pushing the borders of Christian territory all the way back to the Orontes River. By the end of 1147 he had been largely successful, with a number of formerly Christian towns, including Artah, falling under his control. In summary, things were looking bad for the Latin Christians, really bad.

And there wasn't an awful lot they could do about it. Immigration from Europe to the Holy Land had slowed to a trickle, and the only standing armies available were those of the Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitaller, neither of which were large enough to take on the might of the Islamic forces. The leaders of the Crusader states had to face up to a sobering truth. Even with all the men they could muster combined with the knights from the military orders, it was by no means certain they could defeat Nur ad-Din and his brother, retake Edessa, and secure the Christian borders. They needed outside help. In short, they needed another Crusade.

Hugh, the Bishop of Jabala, was chosen by Queen Melisende to travel to Europe, inform the Pope about the fall of Edessa, and ask him to call for a new Crusade.

It's fair to say that the Papacy at this time was going through a bit of a rough patch. The previous Pope, Lucius II, had been killed in the line of duty. Fighting had broken out in Rome, and Lucius had led an armed attack on the city. During the fighting he was hit by a heavy stone and died of his wounds. That happened in February 1145. Bishop Hugh arrived initially to see the new Pope, Pope Eugenius III, in autumn 1145, when Pope Eugenius had been on the throne for only six months. Rome still wasn't keen to have a Pope in its midst, and for his own safety, the exiled Pope had installed himself in the city of Viterbo, 80 miles from Rome.

Pope Eugenius was a somewhat surprising choice for a Pope. A bit of a country bumpkin, he was quiet, unassuming and is described diplomatically by John Julius Norwich in his book "The Popes" as, quote "a simple character". He was a former monk from Clairvaux and was in fact the first Pope to have come from the monastery at Clairvaux. You would think that Bernard, Abbott of Clairvaux, would be really pleased to see one of his former pupils rise to the position of head of the Roman Catholic Church, but he really isn't.

Remember Bernard? We met him in both the episodes on the Knights Templar and Eleanor of Aquitaine. At the moment, Bernard of Clairvaux is 55 years of age and is

probably the most influential figure in the European Church. Emaciated and racked with pain from the fasting and physical deprivations to which he has subjected his body for the purification of his soul, Bernard is a highly energetic, passionate, persuasive man. Full of fire and zeal, with a legendary ability to preach to the masses.

Bernard also had a firm grip on the politics of the era. The problems facing the Church at this time are particularly messy, On top of being highly unpopular with the people of Rome, the Church was grappling with the expansionist policies of King Roger of Sicily, a Norman who was no friend of the Catholic Church, and who was also the traditional enemy of the Byzantines. It was also fielding requests by Armenian Bishops for assistance against the Byzantines in Cilicia, and now it had the fall of Edessa to contend with. It was going to take a strong, intelligent Pope who was wise to the ways of the world to work through this mess. Was Pope Eugenius III that man? Bernard of Clairvaux, who had educated and trained Pope Eugenius, didn't think so. He made his views clear in a letter to the Curia who had elected his former pupil. It's worth reading what Bernard said.

Right, so this is a quote from Bernard's letter to the Curia. "God have mercy on you. What have you done? What reason, what counsel made you, as soon as the late Pope died, suddenly rush upon this rustic, lay hands upon him when hiding from the world, and knocking away his axe, mattock or hoe, drag him to the Palatine, place him on the throne, clothe him in purple and fine linen and gird him with a sword? Had you no other wise and experienced man amongst you who would have been better suited to these things?" End of quote. So it's fair to say that Bernard has some concerns that Pope Eugenius is not up to the job.

But regardless of Bernard's feelings on the matter, his former pupil is now the Pope, and it is to him that Hugh, the Bishop of Jabala, makes his first call, petitioning the leader of the Church to launch a Crusade. Wanting to ensure that the call for a Crusade is clearly heard, Bishop Hugh also meets with the two most powerful secular leaders in Europe, King Louis VII of France, and Conrad of Hohenstauffen, King of Germany.

While Bishop Hugh was traveling to speak with the two Kings, Pope Eugenius, decided to formally call for a Crusade. While the new pope may be adept at wielding farming tools, he fortunately also possesses enough savvy to realize that he's going to need the support of at least one of the political heavyweights in Europe for the Crusade to succeed. So, to whom should he address his formal request for a Crusade to the Holy Land? Let's take a brief look at the contenders.

Perhaps the monarch most likely, in theory at least, to want to lead a Crusade is King Stephen of England. His father, Stephen of Blois, was one of the leaders of the First Crusade, but that didn't go so well, with Stephen of Blois abandoning the siege at Antioch and earning for himself the reputation of a coward. It's likely that his son would jump at the chance to redeem the family name by leading this Crusade, but that's not going to happen. King Stephen has been battling a civil war in England for the past ten years, and to leave his chaotic realm would effectively mean abandoning his crown, and he just can't do that. So we can rule King Stephen out.

Next on the list is King Roger of Sicily. We can rule him out almost immediately. Yes, he is a Norman with a sound reputation for success on overseas conquests, and he does control an impressive army, which would be most useful in any Christian offensive against the Muslims, but his relationship with the Church and with the Papacy in particular, is, well,

troubled. Back in the 1130's he had provided military backing for an anti-Pope, causing a schism in the Church. Then, some years later he defeated Pope Innocent on the battlefield, claiming the Papal treasury, the Cardinals and the Church archives as spoils of war. King Roger was not a man whom the Church could trust. There is no way that Pope Eugenius is going to arm King Roger and send him off to conquer land in the name of the Church. Pope Eugenius knew that any land conquered by Roger would likely end up under Roger's control. So, Roger's off the list.

That brings us to King Conrad III of Germany. King Conrad was an experienced warrior and had already made one pilgrimage to the Holy Land. But he was in a similar position to that of King Stephen in England. At the time when Pope Eugenius was considering calling for a Crusade, King Conrad had five separate military conflicts underway in his Kingdom. He was also a strong military ally of the Church, and it's likely that Pope Eugenius wished him to remain in Europe to support the Papacy's reinstatement in Rome, and to help curb the ambitions of King Roger of Sicily.

Well, that left just one man on the list, and of course you know who it is. King Louis VII of France. A year has passed since King Louis attended the consecration ceremony at the Church of Saint-Denis, where he had his heart-to-heart conversation with Bernard of Clairvaux that we discussed in Episode 26. Bernard knows that Louis is wracked with guilt over the incident at Vitry, where the church fire killed so many innocents. He also knows that Louis is beside himself with fear about his soul, and is desperate to do penance and atone for his sins. And of course, King Louis's young wife, Eleanor, of Aquitaine, is the niece of the man most under threat in the Crusader states, Prince Raymond of Antioch. Yes, there is the problem of Louis' lack of military expertise, but despite this King Louis of France is the standout candidate.

On the 1st of December 1145, Pope Eugenius addressed a Papal Bull to King Louis and all the faithful of the Kingdom of France, urging them to go to the rescue of the Latin Christians in the Holy Land, and promising them in return security for their worldly possessions and remission for their sins. The Papal Bull issued by Pope Eugenius is known as the "Quantum praedecessores", which translated from the Latin means "How greatly our predecessors", after its opening words. It's the earliest Papal Bull calling for a Crusade to survive, the one issued by Pope Urban II fifty years earlier, having been lost to history. As you can probably guess, just by its opening two words, the document called upon the current generation to live up to the illustrious deeds of the generation which embarked on the First Crusade.

This theme played nicely into sentiments already existing in Europe at this time. Fifty years had passed since the success of the First Crusade. The average person during this period didn't live much past their fifties, which meant that most, if not all, of the people who had embarked on the First Crusade had died. As such, the stories of the First Crusade had passed from those actually told by people who had lived through the events to the records of chroniclers who wrote down their recollections of the events they had experienced and the deeds that had witnessed. But of course, most people in Europe at this time were illiterate and couldn't read these stories for themselves. Instead, they could see images of the battles in the Holy Land depicted in churches and monasteries.

The outcome of the First Crusade even affected the architecture of churches in Europe, with many round churches built at this time, imitating the design of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Then, of course, there were the travelling players. Two very

popular plays of this era were "The Song of Antioch" and "The Song of Jerusalem", in which actors played out the events and the heroic exploits of the leaders of the First Crusade. Many a knight and aspiring Crusader would have learnt about the First Crusade from watching one of these plays staged by torchlight in the great hall of a local castle or manor house. Perhaps, after watching such a performance they wondered whether they would ever have the chance to go on a Crusade themselves, and secure their place in history. With the issuing of the Papal Bull they were now offered that chance.

Certainly, when King Louis received the Papal Bull, which arrived shortly after a visit to the Royal court by Bishop Hugh of Jabala, who would also urge Louis to take up the Cross, he was keen to heed its call. Prior to the arrival of the Papal Bull he had already taken the step of calling his nobles to a meeting at Bourges, where he was holding court at Christmas time. He enthusiastically informed them that he had decided to launch a Crusade and urge them to accompany him to the Holy Land, but the request fell flat. Of all those present, only one man, the Bishop of Langres, spoke up in support of the proposal.

Their concerns were twofold. Firstly, no monarch had been on a Crusade before, and it wasn't clear what implications this would have for the administration of the realm. During the First Crusade all the monarchs remained in Europe, while their vassals ventured forth to the Middle East. Any Crusade would likely take years to reach a conclusion, and what would happen to France in the meanwhile? Their second concern was King Louis' military experience, or the lack thereof. It was true that King Louis had, on occasion, led an army, but the results had been, well, disastrous. And so King Louis's initial call for his nobles to embark on a Crusade led by their King fell on deaf ears. Most likely concerned and disappointed by the lukewarm response to his proposal, King Louis decided to delay matters until the following Easter, by which time the formal Papal Bull requesting him to call for a Crusade would have arrived.

In the meanwhile, King Louis wrote to Pope Eugenius, telling him of his desire to lead a Crusade, and he sent for the one man who could motivate his nobles and ignite some enthusiasm for the proposal, his confidante and the most influential man in the Church at the time, Bernard of Clairvaux.

Bernard wasn't just the founder of an influential abbey, confidante to kings and puppet master behind the Papacy. He was also a superstar. By that, I mean he had enormous drawing power amongst the people. His preaching was legendary. He was a rock star, motivational speaker, and evangelical firebrand, all rolled into one. Any news that Bernard was going to be preaching at a certain time and location was bound to attract a massive audience, and that's exactly what happened at Vezelay, at Easter in the year 1146.

People came from all over France to hear Bernard speak. In echoes of the speech given by Pope Urban at Clermont fifty years earlier, the audience was far too large to fit inside the town's cathedral, so a platform was hastily erected in a field outside the town. There's no record of what Bernard actually said to his audience that day, and for once I think that's a good thing. With Bernard, the power of his message didn't come from the words themselves, but their delivery. A mere reading of the actual text spoken by Bernard that day could not convey the way in which they were spoken and the skill which Bernard possessed in turning a mass of minds to his cause.

We do know that he read the Papal Bull and urged his audience to take up the Cross. We also know that by the end of his speech, the crowd began chanting "Crosses, Give us

crosses!", and very quickly the pile of crosses fashioned from cloth, which had been prepared for the occasion, ran out. Bernard threw off his outer garments and tore them up, to be made into more crosses. At sunset, a group of sewers was still busy, frantically trying to sew enough crosses to satisfy the demand. The movement which was to be known to history as the Second Crusade, was underway.

But, like Pope Urban fifty years earlier, Bernard knew that preaching the Crusade in just one location wasn't going to garner enough recruits. Like Pope Urban, he needed to embark on a tour of the region, drawing audiences from across the country, calling people to take up the Cross, and reaching as many ears as possible. And that's exactly what he did. He embarked on an extensive tour of France, reading Pope Eugenius' *Quantum Praedecessores* to crowds of people, and adding his own stirring words. Vast numbers of people who heard his speeches pledged to make the journey to the Holy Land.

Also like Pope Urban before him, Bernard knew that there would be realms that he couldn't reach. To ensure that the message reached these far flung places, Bernard sent letters to England, northern Italy and Brittany. Some of Bernard's persuasive rhetoric is evident in the text of his letters, and it's worth reading an extract from one of them to give you an idea of the content of his speeches. And I quote, "Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of abundant salvation. The Earth is shaken because the Lord of Heaven is losing his land, the land in which he appeared to men. For our sins, the enemy of the Cross has begun to lift his sacrilegious head there, to devastate with the sword that blessed land, that land of promise. What are you doing, you mighty men of valor? What are you doing, you servants of the Cross? I call blessed the generation that can seize an opportunity of such rich indulgence as this. Now, oh mighty soldiers, oh men of war, you have a cause for which you can fight with no danger to your souls, a cause in which to conquer is glorious, and for which to die is gain." End of quote. They are stirring words, and if you combine those words with Bernard's oratory skills, you can get an idea of how persuasive his message was.

It helped too that there was a bit of an economic downturn in some parts of Europe at the time. It hadn't been a good growing year, crops had failed, and Bernard impressed upon his audiences the opportunities which awaited those in the Holy Land. Tradesmen and merchants, in particular, were persuaded that great rewards awaited them if they embarked on the Crusade.

At the end of his French recruitment drive, Bernard embarked on a grueling seven month long tour of Germany. His goals here were three-fold: recruit more Crusaders; to quell an uprising of violence against the Jews; and to convince King Conrad of Germany to join the Crusade. He was overwhelmingly successful in all three of his goals. Starting in Flanders, his tour of Germany was marked by miracles and massive crowds. The first recorded miracle occurred at the Abbey of Affligem, at the beginning of Bernard's journey. It was recorded at the time, that when Bernard passed a statue of the Virgin Mary near the church door, he said "Ave Maria" to it, to which the statue politely responded "Ave Bernard". Miracles kept occurring. In fact, the sum total of miracles recorded by the end of Bernard's tour of Flanders and Germany were as follows: 235 cripples healed, 172 blind people restored to sight, numerous demons exorcised and, somewhat surprisingly, one person raised from the dead.

Bernard's passionate preaching, coupled with his ability to perform miracles, meant that he drew massive crowds wherever he stopped to speak. He was incredibly popular, and his

tour was studded with Justin Bieber-esque type moments. On more than one occasion, he found himself trapped inside his place of accommodation by the eager crowds outside, forcing him to escape through a back exit. The result of all this was Bernard recruited thousands of citizens across Germany to the Crusading cause.

During his tour of Germany, Bernard was called upon by the Archbishop of Mainz to rein in a Cistercian monk called Radulf, who had been doing a tour of his own, preaching an anti-semitic Crusading message. The message was similar to that promulgated fifty years earlier, namely that before going to the Holy Land to battle the Muslims, Crusaders should start their holy war in Europe against the local Jews. The resulting violence against the Jewish communities occurred in similar cities to those fifty years earlier: in Cologne, Mainz, Worms, Speyer, and Strasbourg.

Bernard caught up with Radulf near the monastery founded at Huy by Peter the Hermit. At this point, I'd love to say that Bernard popped into the monastery for a chat with Peter the Hermit. But unfortunately, although Peter did live to be a very old man, he had been dead for around 15 years at this time, so he doesn't get to make another appearance in this podcast. Oh. Anyway, Bernard met with Radulf, berated him for preaching his violent message and ordered him to return to his monastery in disgrace, which he duly did.

Then, to cap off his successful tour of Germany, Bernard met with King Conrad III, and eventually managed to persuade him to join the Crusade. As we've stated previously, Conrad had been reluctant to commit to the Crusade because of unrest within his realm. Bernard assisted him to quell the troubles, and it seems King Conrad finally made his decision when his main rival, Duke Welf of Bavaria, declared in Christmas 1146 that he would take up the Cross. No longer having to worry about what Duke Welf would get up to in his absence, King Conrad made a public declaration at Speyer Cathedral that he too would join the Crusade. Bernard's recruitment drive was complete.

Now, all this sounds like Bernard's mission was a complete success, and it was, but things aren't as rosy as they appear. If alarm bells weren't ringing, then a note of caution should have been sounding. The first problem was Bernard had gone against Pope Eugenius' wishes in recruiting King Conrad. The Pope had envisaged a purely French Crusade, led by one person, the French King Louis. Having just one commander would, thought the Pope, prevent the difficulties encountered during the First Crusade, with different personalities vying for overall control of the expedition. But that had all been blown out of the water when Bernard recruited King Conrad.

Secondly, the leaders of the Crusader states had a plan in mind when they appealed to Europe for a Crusade. They wanted the Muslims ejected from Edessa, it was as simple as that. Yet this message hadn't seemed to have made its way to the masses. Pope Eugenius' *Quantum Praedecessores* failed to make a demand that Edessa be recaptured, and this goal didn't seem to be mentioned by Bernard in his preaching, either. The result was, as pointed out by Thomas Asbridge in his book "The Crusades", the desire by the leaders of the Crusader states to be sent military reinforcements which they could command and use to push the Muslims out of Crusader territory was in direct conflict with the aims of the participants in the Second Crusade.

The people donning the Cross did so for a variety of reasons: for the salvation of their souls; to emulate the deeds of their fathers; to take advantage of commercial opportunities; or simply to visit the holy sites in the Middle East. Unfortunately, not

everyone was reading from the same page. The leaders of the Crusader states, in calling for a Crusade, were wanting fighters they could use in the military campaigns. What they were getting was likely to be something quite different.

But, regardless of its direction and focus, the Second Crusade was well and truly out of the bag. Join me next week, as tens of thousands of Crusaders set off from across Europe towards the Holy Land. Until next week, bye for now.

End