

History of the Crusades.
Episode 53
The Third Crusade I.

Hello again. Last week we saw a dramatic milestone take place in the History of the Crusades, as Jerusalem fell to Saladin's forces. The fall of the Holy City sparked Europe into action, and the assistance that the residents of the Crusader states had been requesting for a while, in the form of another Crusade, will finally take place. This week we start to set the scene for the Third Crusade.

Right, so first, let's deal with the Holy Land. What was happening in the Holy Land after the fall of Jerusalem? Well, although the conquest of the Kingdom of Jerusalem by Saladin was largely bloodless, to the Latin Christians who lived there it was still a devastating, traumatic event. Latin Christians had been present in the Holy Land since the First Crusade, some 88 years earlier. This meant that, for many Latin Christians, they had called the Holy Land home for three generations. Uprooted suddenly from the land in which their parents and their grandparents had been born, the roads across the Kingdom of Jerusalem were filled with traumatized, homeless, anxious Latin Christian refugees.

The city of Jerusalem had been effectively purged of Latin Christians. As we saw last week, Saladin required Latin Christian residents of the city to pay a ransom before they could leave the city. Those who couldn't pay were sold into slavery. Balian of Ibelin negotiated payment for 7,000 of the city's poorest residents, but around 7,000 men and 8,000 women ended up being sold into slavery. The wealthier Latin Christian citizens of Jerusalem hurriedly tried to sell items they couldn't carry with them. Houses, businesses, and furniture hit the market at fire-sale prices. The buyers were mostly non-Latin Christians who planned to remain in the city: Jacobites and Greek Orthodox Christians.

Actually, most non-Latin Christians in Jerusalem were happy to see the back of the departing Latin Christians. They were heartily sick of worshipping under the yoke of the dominant Latin Christians, and hoped that under Muslim rule they would fare better. Their hopes came to fruition when Saladin appointed an Orthodox Christian to be Patriarch of Jerusalem. Not only that, Saladin sent an embassy to Emperor Isaac Angelus in Constantinople, celebrating the appointment of the new Byzantine Patriarch of Jerusalem by presenting an array of gifts to the Emperor. Among the gifts was an elephant, jars of expensive balsam, rare spices, and a selection of Turkish horses. Emperor Isaac Angelus returned the favor, presenting Saladin's representatives with gifts of armor and weapons he had seized from the invading Sicilian army some months before, and robes of honor for Saladin and his son.

Back in Jerusalem, the doors of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre were ordered to be closed. Some of Saladin's Emir's urged him to destroy the building, but in the end, Saladin made the astute observation that even if the building were destroyed, it would still be a focus of Latin Christian pilgrimages and worship, as it was the site of the cross on the grave so sacred to the Christian religion. So the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was left alone. Other Latin Christian churches and public buildings were turned over to the Muslim religion, with many being converted into Muslim seminaries or schools.

Friday prayers began again at the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the 9th of October 1187. The Al-Aqsa Mosque had been used by the Latin Christians initially as part of the royal palace,

and later as part of the headquarters for the Knights Templar. The building was restored and rejuvenated, and was purified with rose-water before returning to a place of Muslim worship.

Some decades earlier, Nur ad-Din had commissioned the building of an elaborate pulpit in the hope that one day it would be installed in the Al-Aqsa mosque. Saladin ordered the pulpit to be brought down from Aleppo, and it was duly installed in the mosque, where it stood for nine centuries before being destroyed in an arson attack, by an Australian man unfortunately, in 1969. Likewise, the Christian altar and Christian statues and pictures were removed from the inside of the Dome of the Rock, and it too was cleansed with rose water and purified with incense, before once again becoming a place of Muslim worship.

So, with all its Latin Christian residents expelled, Jerusalem reverted to the center for Muslim worship it had been prior to the First Crusade.

The Latin Christians from Jerusalem who didn't end up in the slave markets took to the roads, joining other Latin Christians from across the Kingdom who didn't wish to live under Muslim rule. They crammed into the only towns across the Crusader states which were defying Saladin: Tyre, Antioch and Tripoli. Most of the noblemen from Jerusalem ended up in Tyre. As we discussed in last week's episode, Tyre was currently being ruled by the energetic, ambitious and fearless French knight Conrad of Montferrat, who was busy shoring up the town's formidable defences. Tyre would be the focus of Latin Christian resistance against the Muslims. It was a formidable stronghold. Alexander the Great had taken seven months to take the city, back in times of antiquity, and once it was in his hands he added fortifications and the famous causeway to make it even more difficult to attack. The Latin Christians themselves had taken six months to wrest the city from Muslim rule back in 1124, so it was clear from the outset the Tyre wouldn't surrender easily to a Muslim attack.

In the summer of 1187 the well-respected cleric Joscius, Archbishop of Tyre, was sent on a mission to Europe to inform the Pope and the Kings of Europe of the dire turn of events in the Holy Land.

A few months later, in November 1187, Saladin attacked the city of Tyre. Luckily for the Latin Christians, the siege was only a half-hearted one. To besiege Tyre properly, Saladin would need a fleet of ships from Egypt, yet in late 1187, armed with only ten ships, he attempted a blockade. Saladin set up camp to the east of the causeway, but found that each time his men attempted to enter the causeway, they were exposed to arrow fire from the adjacent Latin Christian ships. Saladin used his ten ships to force a blockade of the harbor.

Now, just a word here about morale in the Muslim camp. You would think that the Muslims would be highly energized and overjoyed by their recent overwhelming victories, and that this would assist them to face a lengthy siege. But not so. The Muslim fighters were tired, really tired. To make things worse, the weather was foul. It was a particularly wet start to winter, and the continuous rain was making life in the tents at Saladin's camp miserable. To top it all off, it was while he was camped outside Tyre that Saladin received the Caliph's response to Saladin's news that he had retaken the Holy City of Jerusalem in the name of Islam. The Caliph didn't congratulate Saladin on his success, nor did the Caliph sound pleased by the news. Instead, the letter listed a number of criticisms of Saladin's recent behavior, including the allegation that he had accepted Iraqi exiles into his army, and

admonished him for using the title al-Nasir in his name, an honor usually reserved for the Caliph. So morale in Saladin's camp was, if not low, then definitely subdued.

The siege continued through the weeks of cold rain until, on the 30th of December 1187, Conrad reversed the siege with an audacious counterattack. Saladin had been using five of his ships every night to blockade the harbor. In the dead of night, Conrad mustered a fleet of seventeen galleys and ten small boats, and just before dawn sent them out to attack the five blockading ships. The Muslims had posted men to keep watch, but unfortunately for them, in the quiet hours before dawn they had dozed off, and only awoke when their ships were being boarded. Some of the sailors jumped overboard, but most were captured, as were their ships. Realizing he couldn't maintain the siege with half his fleet captured, Saladin ordered the siege to be lifted. Tyre was safe for now.

Now, this minor victory for the Latin Christians, the first one against Saladin for quite a while, was a huge morale booster, and cemented Conrad of Montferrat's position as leader of the resistance. But the reality was that Tyre was going to need outside help to continue to overcome Saladin's attempts to subdue it, and that outside help was going to have to come from Europe.

That being the case, let's see how Joscius, the Archbishop of Acre, is faring on his journey. His first port of call was Sicily, and he arrived there at the end of summer in 1187, after a quick and uneventful voyage. King William II of Sicily, had heard rumors of the defeat of the Latin Christians at Hattin, but when he heard the full account of the extent of the disaster, he went into mourning for four days. Dressed only in a sack cloth, he retreated from the world and prayed for the salvation of the Holy Land. Now you might remember from Episode 48, "The Decline of Byzantium", that King William's army had recently invaded the Byzantine Empire by sailing to Thessalonica and attempting to march to Constantinople. That was two years ago. The Sicilian Fleet was currently in the waters around Cyprus, giving assistance to Isaac Comnenus, who in defiance of Constantinople had named himself Lord of Cyprus, and generally doing the best they could to irritate the current Byzantine Emperor, Isaac Angelus.

Now, there are a few things that you need to know about King William II. Firstly, he isn't the sort of king who goes into battle. He's the sort of king who appoints a commander and gets him to go into battle, while he waits at home in his palace to hear the outcome. Now, this is not at all unusual today. In fact, it would be extraordinary if a modern world leader became involved in the front line of a battle they had authorized. But back in the 1100's, it was highly unusual and irregular. The second thing you need to know is that King William is married to one of Eleanor of Aquitaine's daughters, Joanna. So the Queen of Sicily is Richard the Lionheart's sister. The final thing you need to know is that King William doesn't have long to live. He doesn't realize this himself, but it's something to keep in mind, particularly since he has no heirs, the only child of his marriage with Joanna having died in infancy.

After his four days of reflection and mourning, King William knows what to do. He hastily makes peace with Emperor Isaac Angelus, and the Sicilian fleet is summoned home to restock and refit. King William then orders 300 knights to set sail for Tripoli. He also provides a ship and an escort for the Archbishop, to assist him in the next leg of his journey to Rome.

When he arrives in Rome, Joscius finds the city in an uproar. News of the fall of Jerusalem had already reached the Papal ears via some Genoese traders, and the shock of the news reportedly caused Pope Urban III, who was already a sick man, to die. The new Pope, Gregory VIII, had already made a start on drafting the Papal response to the fall of Jerusalem, a document known as "Audita Tremendi". The document was finalized shortly after Joscius' arrival in Rome and was then distributed across Christendom, together with letters confirming Papal commitment to a new Crusade. Audita Tremendi described the calamitous events in the Holy Land, and identified Saladin as the enemy of Christendom, likening him to the devil. It mourned the loss of the True Cross, and retrieving it from Muslim hands became a priority. The document attempted to explain why this terrible event had occurred. Basically, it stated that the Latin Christians had been smitten by the divine hand as punishment for their sins. The Latin Christians ought to have mended their sinful ways after the fall of Edessa, and their failure to do so brought about the fall of Jerusalem.

The document also apportioned some blame to European Christians. That being the case, it was time for everyone to start mending their ways. Christians were called upon to take up the Cross, not for money or for worldly glory, but according to the will of God. They were urged to travel in simple clothes and take only items which were necessary with them. The Pope then ordained a fast on every Friday for the next five years, and decreed that no meat should be consumed on Wednesdays and Saturdays. In closing, he stated that those who took up the Cross would be granted remission of all confessed sins, and those who died on the campaign would be guaranteed eternal life. For the duration of the Crusade, the participants would be granted immunity from legal prosecution and interest on their debts, and their goods and families in Europe would be placed under the protection of the Church.

Really, when all was said and done, the document issued by the Pope didn't need to be very persuasive. It was the shocking news itself which galvanized the leaders and the fighting men of Europe into action. Jerusalem had fallen. The True Cross had been taken. It was time to go to war. Pope Gregory VIII, didn't get to see the results of his Audita Tremendi. A couple of months after it was issued, he followed the lead of Pope Urban III by dying in office. A new pope, Pope Clement III, took up the cause, and immediately moved to make contact with the most powerful leader in Europe, Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, while the tireless Joscius, Archbishop of Tyre, traveled over the Alps to meet with the Kings of France and England.

Now, at the moment, the King of England is the aging King Henry II, husband to the 65 year old Eleanor of Aquitaine, whom he has been holding in confinement for the past ten or so years, and father to a couple of headstrong, unwieldy sons. Like his counterpart the King of Sicily, Henry doesn't have all that long to live, and also like the King of Sicily, he is unaware of this fact. Henry's surviving sons are Richard, who at one stage was set to inherit England, Normandy, Anjou, Poitou, and Aquitaine from his father, but who had recently been forced to hand Poitou and Aquitaine over to his mother Eleanor, and John, nicknamed "Lackland" due to the fact that he was set to inherit only Ireland and some estates in England.

Now, at the moment, the situation regarding England and France boils down to a three way conflict between Richard, the English King Henry II, and King Philip II of France. As you may remember from the episodes on Eleanor of Aquitaine, the Kingdoms of England and France at this time were rather different to the countries of England and France today.

King Henry II of England was the monarch of England, and his Kingdom also covered territory on the European mainland, territory which has traditionally been recognized as part of France. In fact, Henry controlled roughly the western half of modern day France, comprising the regions of Normandy, Anjou, Poitou, Aquitaine, and Gascony. The Kingdom of France covered an area roughly the same size as that controlled by King Henry, the region covering most of the eastern half of modern day France.

King Henry, at this stage, seemed to be in conflict with everyone. He is in conflict with his son, the 30 year old Richard, who at the moment is Count of Poitou and Duke of Aquitaine, as he's constantly trying to wrest land off him to give to his younger son, the more favored John. Richard so far has managed to foil all his father's attempts to redistribute his territory. Another point of conflict between Richard and his father is Richard's close relationship with King Phillip of France. King Henry doesn't like King Philip one little bit. For many years, King Henry has used the fact that Richard is betrothed to King Philip's sister Alice as a diplomatic tool. However, the engagement has now dragged on for nearly two decades, and Alice and Richard seem no closer to tying the knot. Richard prefers to spend most of his time in Aquitaine, while Alice spends most of hers at Henry's court in England, and rumors at the time pointed to her having an affair with Henry. All this is a bit much for King Philip, who wants to avenge his sister's honor.

In June 1187 Philip demanded that King Henry return both Alice and her dowry to France. Henry refused, so Philip invaded Henry's territory and took the town of Chateauroux. Henry and Richard joined forces to resist Phillip's advances, and eventually a truce was signed. However, tensions between the two kingdoms would simmer, and threaten to boil over into a war for the next 27 years. Following the signing of the truce, Richard snubbed his father and rode back to Paris with Philip, where apparently he offered to assist Philip in his war against Henry once the truce expired. So this gives you an idea of the conflict between the Kings of England and France at the time the Pope called for the Third Crusade

Since Richard, Count of Poitou and Duke of Aquitaine, will later become King of England, will become known to history as Richard the Lionheart, and will play a central role in the Third Crusade, we should take a moment to examine him a little more closely. It's a bit tricky to work out exactly what sort of man Richard was, due to the myth and legends that have woven their way around him. Unusually, he was a legend within his own lifetime, so exaggerated stories of his heroism and exploits were common even while he was alive. But we should do our best to separate fact from fiction, and form some sort of idea of Richard's character.

A contemporary witness gave this description of Richard's physical appearance, and I quote "He was tall, of elegant build. The color of his hair was between red and gold. His limbs were supple and straight. He had quite long arms, which were particularly convenient for drawing a sword and wielding it most effectively. His long legs matched the arrangement of his whole body." End of quote. To give you an idea of the superhero status afforded to Richard, the same chronicler goes on to say, and I quote, "Richard had the valor of Hector, the heroism of Achilles. He was not inferior to Alexander. Also, which is very unusual for one so renowned as a knight, Nestor's tongue and Ulysses' wisdom enabled him to excel others in every undertaking, both in speaking and in acting." End of quote.

Richard was very much a product of Aquitaine, the Land of the Troubadours, and history records that he was an adept singer and writer of songs and poetry. His native tongue was old French, or Languedoc, and he had an excellent knowledge of Latin. The people of Aquitaine were renowned for their rebellious nature, with the result that from quite an early age Richard gained a wealth of military experience, not so much in major battles, but he showed a talent for siege, warfare and a flair for military command. Richard was not so keen on England. He didn't speak the language very well, and during his ten year reign as King of England, he spent a total of barely a year in the country. His heart was in Aquitaine, in southwest France, a sentiment shared by his mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, with whom he shared a close relationship.

When Joscius Archbishop of Tyre made his way to Rome bearing the sad tidings of the fall of Jerusalem, Richard was around thirty years of age. In November 1187 before the Papal Bull calling for a Crusade had even left Rome, Richard made a startling declaration. Without even doing the courtesy of consulting his father, the King of England, Richard publicly declared in the city of Tours that he would take the Cross. The Third Crusade had its first high profile participant. Join me next week, as we see who else responds to the Pope's call for a Crusade.

Now, just before I go, I thought I should take this opportunity to clarify something right from the outset. I declared that I intended to devote specific episodes to Richard the Lionheart and Saladin. Well, now I've decided that they're not going to have their own episodes. Very little is known of Saladin's early life, and we've already covered his military and political exploits in some detail. Likewise, Richard the Lionheart scored a mention back in the Eleanor of Aquitaine episodes, and today I've provided as much background as we need to move forward with him. So the upshot is, Richard the Lionheart and Saladin are not going to have separate episodes dedicated to discussions of their lives. I thought I should tell you that now, in case you panic, thinking you've missed the Saladin and Richard the Lionheart episodes. You haven't, because they don't exist. But don't worry. All the information that would have gone into those episodes will be spread out amongst the general Crusade episodes, so you won't be missing out on any facts. Glad we cleared that up. Until next week, bye for now.

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