

History of the Crusades.  
Episode 61  
The Third Crusade IX.

Hello again. Last week we saw the Kings of England and France preside over a victory at the Siege of Acre.

Now, to get things into perspective, we should keep in mind that, strategically at least, the victory at Acre doesn't mean an awful lot. Really, it just adds an extra secure coastal port to the Latin Christian collection. Instead of just having the city of Tyre to dock their ships and off-load their supplies, they now have two ports, Tyre and Acre a little further down the coast. The vast expanse of the Kingdom of Jerusalem is still under Saladin's control. Although having said that, while the loss of Acre was of little strategic consequence to Saladin, there was one big military impact, and that concerned the Muslim navy. When the city surrendered, as many as 70 battle-ships had been docked inside the sheltered inner harbor at Acre, and all these ships fell to the Latin Christians. With such a loss, the balance of dominance on the sea between the two forces shifted. Never again will Saladin be able to contemplate a complete victory over the Latin Christians in the arena of naval warfare.

There was, of course, one other way in which the loss of Acre had a big impact. Psychologically, the victory at Acre was massive. For the Latin Christians, this was a huge, morale-boosting win. They had taken on the might of the Muslim forces and had emerged victorious. For King Guy in particular, it must have been a sweet success. No doubt he felt a warm and fuzzy feeling every time he recalled that his mad plan to take Acre had actually succeeded.

For Saladin, the defeat was devastating. He was already battling the symptoms of depression, and the surrender of the garrison at Acre hit him hard. He knew full well that he had made some major errors of judgment in his military campaign, starting of course with his failure to intercept King Guy's army as it marched to Acre, and that these errors had resulted in a win for the Latin Christians. The Latin Christians entered Acre, believing that God was now on their side, and the Muslims saw the loss of Acre as a sign of divine displeasure.

As soon as the Latin Christians entered the city they went straight to work. The city's defenses had taken a terrible beating, and the Christian army now worked tirelessly to rebuild and repair them. The churches within Acre were repaired, cleaned, and re-consecrated. Once all the work was done, the army sat back and did what bored and recently victorious soldiers do best: drinking, fighting, gambling, and whoring. The two Kings took up residence within Acre. King Richard and Queen Berengaria settled into the former royal palace near the north wall of the city, while King Philip occupied the former headquarters of the Knights Templar, situated near the sea on the peninsula. In accordance with the agreement they had made to divide the spoils of the Crusade equally among them, the two Kings split Acre between them. This upset Duke Leopold of Austria, who as the head of the German army believed that he should claim a portion of the city on behalf of Germany. He raised his banner next to King Richard's, but the English took it down, threw it into the dirt, and trampled all over it. It was an insult that Duke Leopold could not forgive. He left Acre and returned to Europe.

The Muslim garrison, which had fought so tirelessly and courageously in defense of the city, were taken into captivity. Latin Christian soldiers lined the road and watched the Muslim prisoners march out of the city. Instead of the bedraggled, defeated force they had been expecting, the Latin Christians were impressed to see the garrison march confidently down the road with their heads held high, looking more like victors than soldiers who had just been defeated. One Latin Christian commentator was moved to write, and I quote "If they were not unbelievers, it would have been said that there were no more decent and brave people than these" end of quote. The agreement reached with Saladin meant that the 2,000 Muslim soldiers who had just been marched out of Acre would become prisoners, along with 100 of the richest and most important Muslim citizens in Acre, who would be kept as hostages. When Saladin had kept his side of the bargain by paying the huge ransom he agreed to, returning the True Cross, and releasing Latin Christian prisoners, then the Muslim prisoners would be released, and the remaining Muslim residents within Acre could leave with their wives and children. In the meanwhile, all the Muslim residents in Acre were herded into one sector of the town, where they could be more easily monitored and controlled.

Representatives of the two Kings were sent to Saladin's camp to inquire exactly when and how the terms of the peace treaty would be met. Initially, the agreement had stipulated that the terms of the peace treaty would be met within thirty days. However, it soon became clear that this timeline was going to be difficult to meet. Many of the prisoners which Saladin was required to release needed to be brought from Damascus, and it seemed that the True Cross was also in Damascus at this time. In addition, Saladin argued that he needed more time to raise the massive amount of money required to meet the terms of the peace treaty. In the end, Saladin proposed that the terms of the treaty be met by way of installments, with the first installment payable by the thirty day deadline. Latin Christian envoys were invited to travel to Damascus to inspect the prisoners, and they returned to Acre on the 24th of July with four Latin Christian prisoners they had selected.

Around a week after this meeting between Saladin and the Latin Christian envoys, so around mid-July 1191, strange rumors began circulating around the Latin Christian camp in Acre. The rumors said that King Philip was about to renounce his vows and leave the Holy Land. The rumors persisted, and on the 22nd of July, King Richard decided that it was time to see whether or not the rumors were true. He attempted to issue a joint proclamation which would be signed by both himself and King Philip, confirming that both Kings would remain in the Holy Land for a period of three years, or until Jerusalem had been re-taken, whichever came first.

Effectively cornered, King Philip finally came clean. He admitted that he had decided that his Crusading vows had been fulfilled now that Acre had been recovered, and he intended to return to France. This, of course, was an absolute bombshell. One chronicler wrote at the time, and I quote "God's mercy. What a turnaround." end of quote.

The big question is, of course, why did King Philip come to this decision? Well, historians have been debating about the exact reasons for hundreds of years, and no one knows for sure what prompted King Philip to make this surprising declaration, but there are quite a few factors which might have contributed to it. Firstly, he was not enjoying himself at all in the Holy Land, not one little bit. He was still struggling with the illness he had contracted during the Siege of Acre, and the summer heat, the strange food and the like, all contributed to his thinking that France seemed like a much better place to be. Then there was King Richard. King Philip, despite having been King for some ten years longer than

Richard, had faded into the background as soon as Richard arrived in the Holy Land. King Richard shone like the sun, and everything he did seemed to be heroic and larger than life. Having to play second fiddle to this brash upstart was starting to get on King Philip's nerves.

But primarily, it's likely that pressing issues concerning his reign back in France led King Philip to make his momentous decision. His wife had died before he left on Crusade, and his only surviving heir was a three year old boy. He really needed to find himself another wife and produce more heirs to ensure the continuity of his line. Also, Count Philip of Flanders had died in Acre just over a month ago, leaving the royal lands around Paris and the County of Flanders in a precarious position. If King Philip acted quickly, he could secure for himself the wealthy region of Artois, and try to influence the contested Flemish succession to France's advantage. He made his decision. For the good of his Kingdom and for the benefit of his own health and well being, he was going back to France.

The decision, unsurprisingly, was not a popular one. All of the French nobility, bar one person, decided not to follow their King's example. The French were staying in the Holy Land, even if their King was not. Conrad of Montferrat, understandably, was worried about the effect of King Philip's imminent departure on his claim to the throne of Jerusalem.

King Philip declared that he would leave Acre on the 1st of August. In the week prior to his departure, a council of reconciliation met to decide the succession issue. After two days of deliberations, they came up with a solution. Guy of Lusignan would remain King of Jerusalem until his death, at which time the crown would pass to Conrad of Montferrat and his descendants. The royal revenues would be shared equally between the two men, and Conrad was immediately awarded the cities of Tyre, Beirut and Sidon. Should both Guy and Conrad die, then the Kingdom would pass to King Richard.

There was one more issue which needed to be settled before King Philip returned to Europe. As we've already seen, King Philip and King Richard's relationship back in Europe was a stormy one. Every so often, King Philip would raid King Richard's lands in France, and likewise Richard wasn't averse to attacking the territory of the French King. One positive point about them both being away on Crusade was that neither would be able to take advantage of the other's absence by attacking their territory back home. But with King Philip returning to Europe, this all changed. King Richard's territories in France were now vulnerable. To address some of King Richard's concerns, King Philip swore a detailed oath of peace on the 29th of July. The oath bound him to cease all attacks on Richard's lands for the period during which Richard was absent on Crusade. Once Richard returned from the Crusade, forty days' notice would be given before hostilities between the two monarchs resumed. King Philip swore the oath with one hand on a Bible and the other hand on the relics of a saint, and it was an oath that he kept, for the most part anyway.

The following day, King Philip handed leadership of the French army over to the Duke of Burgundy, and he gifted his half-share in Acre to Conrad. On the 31st of July, King Philip, along with half the hostages taken at Acre, sailed for Tyre. At Tyre he off-loaded his hostages and handed them over to Conrad, ensuring that he would be the benefactor of any ransom paid by Saladin. Then, without any fanfare, on the 3rd of August, he boarded a ship at Tyre and set sail back to France.

Now, history has judged King Philip quite harshly for abandoning the Crusade. It certainly wasn't a popular move at the time, and despite ending up being a successful monarch -

Christopher Tyerman in his book "God's War" writes that during the rest of his reign, King Philip lifted royal authority to heights not seen since the Carolingian heyday of the ninth century - he was never a favorite of his people.

Contrast King Philip here with King Richard. Famously, Stephen Runciman stated that King Richard was, and I quote "a bad son, a bad husband, and a bad king" end of quote. While this may or may not have been the case, his subjects loved him. The name Richard the Lionheart is relatively well known today compared to many other monarchs of the Middle Ages, and there's a magnificent statue of him outside the British Houses of Parliament, despite the fact that he spent barely any time in England during his reign and never got around to learning the English language. So there's a lesson for you all. If you want people to build statues in your honor and have your name reverberate throughout history, be a popular leader rather than a successful one. I guess the image of a gallant soldier galloping toward victory is more enduring than the image of the dull but steadfast administrator.

Right, well, once King Philip departed, King Richard was the undisputed leader of the Crusade, a position which he was happy to be in. Eager to maintain the momentum and continue on his conquering way to Jerusalem, King Richard set about finalizing Saladin's compliance with the peace treaty. King Richard's envoys met with Saladin to inspect the True Cross, which by now had been brought up from Damascus, and the Latin Christian prisoners. The envoys reminded Saladin that to comply with the terms of the peace treaty, the first installment was due on the 12th of August. This involved the return of 1,600 Latin Christian prisoners, the handing over of the True Cross, and the payment of 100,000 gold pieces.

The 12th of August came and went, with the first installment not being paid. There are conflicting reports about why this occurred. Some Latin Christian accounts suggested that Saladin was having difficulty raising the money in time, but this isn't supported by Muslim sources. It appears instead that Saladin may have tried calling King Richard's bluff by attempting to re-negotiate the peace terms, possibly with a view to delaying the Crusaders' departure from Acre until autumn or even winter set in. Instead of paying the first installment, Saladin's negotiators requested that the entire garrison be released when the payment was made, and that hostages be exchanged to guarantee the payment of the rest of the money.

If this was a bluff, it didn't work. King Richard responded to Saladin's move with a brutality which reverberates to this day. On the 20th of August, he marched the entire Muslim garrison, comprising some 2,700 men, out to a plain near Acre. Then he ordered that they all be killed.

Now, remember that gunpowder had not yet been invented. The men all had to be killed individually with a sword or a lance, and the massacre must have been a long, drawn-out, horribly messy affair. If you were one of the unarmed Muslim soldiers on the plain that day, waiting for your turn to be killed, while hundreds of your compatriots were dying around you, it would have been a horrific experience. A group of Muslim soldiers found the corpses of the garrison the next day, on a field red with blood.

The incident marked a turning point in relations between the Muslims and the Latin Christians. Saladin was shocked and outraged. The custom in the Middle East for dealing with prisoners whom you had no wish to keep was to sell them at the slave markets. No

one wanted to be a slave, but given the choice between death and slavery, most would choose the latter. King Richard's radical departure from this custom, of which it has to be said he might not have been aware, was a game-changer. From that moment on, Saladin ordered the execution of any Latin Christian soldier unfortunate enough to be captured, and along with the sack of Jerusalem in 1099, the incident was used to inspire Muslim Jihad, or Holy War.

At the time, King Richard's actions didn't attract much criticism in the west. There was the odd chronicler who denounced the massacre, but generally it was seen as an act of military expediency. King Richard didn't wish to be delayed any further, and taking the prisoners with him on his march to Jerusalem would have slowed him down. These were gallant Muslim fighters, who had defended Acre with skill and determination, and Richard had no desire to hand them back so they could be used against him. Over the years, opinion about the morality of King Richard's actions has fluctuated according to the changing values of the times. Sometimes his actions are seen as that of a level-headed commander who has to do what is necessary to achieve his ends, while other times the massacre is seen as akin to a war crime.

But regardless of this, the outcome for the Latin Christians was the same. With the defenses at Acre now repaired and the Muslim prisoners now killed, the Crusade was ready to move out of Acre and onwards towards Jerusalem.

Now, I'm afraid you're going to have to wait until next year to hear how Richard fares in the next stage of his journey. I'm taking a few weeks off over Christmas, but all things going well, I shall be ready to cast my pod again on Friday the 17th of January. Until then, I'd like to thank you all for listening and to wish you a very merry Christmas. Over the festive season, I'll still be on Facebook, just search for "History of the Crusades Podcast", or on Twitter under the name @historycrusades. So if you want to keep in touch, by all means do so. So until then, bye for now.

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