

History of the Crusades.
Episode 37
The Second Crusade IX.

Hello again. Last week we saw the combined armies of the Second Crusade and the army of the Kingdom of Jerusalem withdraw from Damascus, only five days into their siege. The massive Christian army had attempted to conquer the ancient Muslim city and had failed in the most embarrassing way possible. They hadn't been defeated by superior forces after a mighty battle. They just up and left, after only five days. This was a devastating blow to the prestige and morale of the Christian forces, while it had the opposite effect on Muslim resistance in the Holy Land. Crusading armies were no longer something to fear. They could be defeated.

So what happened to the leaders of the Second Crusade after the disaster in Damascus? We're about to find out.

King Conrad returned to the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and in one last ditch effort to revive the fortunes of the Second Crusade, he joined in making plans to attack the port of Ascalon, which had been one of the options on the table before the Crusaders decided to attack Damascus. A strategy was formulated and a date and time were set for the mustering of the Christian forces. King Conrad and his men turned up at the designated time and place but, save for a handful of other men, no one else showed up. King Conrad then gave up. He finally realized that the military campaign that was the Second Crusade was dead in the water and not worth reviving. Shortly afterwards, he and his household set sail from Acre back to Europe.

They landed in Thessalonica, where he received an invitation from Emperor Manuel, inviting him to spend Christmas as a guest of the Byzantine court in Constantinople. King Conrad and Emperor Manuel had grown close ever since King Conrad was nursed back to health under the Emperor's supervision after his misadventure in Anatolia. He accepted the invitation, and by all reports he and his men spent a pleasant festive season at the Imperial court. During his stay, his brother, Henry of Austria, married Manuel's niece, Theodora, and while many Byzantines were mortified to see their Princess doomed to living her life in the barbarous west with her German husband, the alliance cemented an already strong bond between King Conrad and the Byzantine Emperor. Importantly, the two allies also agreed to unite against the Empire's traditional enemy, the Normans, with King Conrad agreeing to assist Emperor Manuel in opposing King Roger of Sicily.

Now, the Germans didn't do too well out of the Second Crusade. They lost many men and gained very little, but two positives emerged for them. First was their new alliance with the Byzantine Empire, and second was the military experience gained by King Conrad's nephew, Frederick of Swabia. Frederick was young and enthusiastic, and had taken charge of the German forces on many occasions when his uncle was indisposed. In doing so, he gained valuable experience, learning what it was to lead, and getting a feel for the Holy Land. We'll be meeting young Frederick again later in this podcast series, after he becomes Emperor Frederick Barbarossa.

While King Conrad was enjoying the hospitality of the Imperial Court in Constantinople, King Louis lingered in Jerusalem. He lingered and lingered and lingered. Unpleasant things were awaiting him back in Europe, and he was in no hurry to leave. He had

embarked on the Crusade to save his soul and the pull of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, one of the holiest places of the Christian faith, was irresistible. He indulged his piety by attending religious services at Christmas time, and was determined to remain in the Holy Land to celebrate Easter. He then had to return to Europe and face the fallout from the failure of the expedition, and deal with his failing marriage.

While King Conrad drew ever closer to the Byzantine Empire, King Louis went in the opposite direction. He had plenty of time in Jerusalem to ponder the reasons for the failure of the Second Crusade, and the more he thought about it, the more he convinced himself that it was the fault of the Byzantines. By the time he departed from the Kingdom of Jerusalem in the spring of 1149, King Louis had decided to form an alliance with the enemy of the Empire, King Roger of Sicily. In recognition of their new bond, King Roger supplied a small fleet of ships to King Louis for the French to use on their journey home. However, Sicily was at war with the Byzantines, and as the ships and their military escort sailed through the eastern Mediterranean, they were attacked by a fleet from the Byzantine Navy. Luckily, King Louis had a French flag handy on his ship. He hastily raised it, the ship was recognized as being French, and was let pass. The other ships weren't so lucky. The ship carrying Queen Eleanor was captured, then later rescued by the Sicilians. One ship containing French men and French possessions was captured and was unable to be rescued by the Sicilians. The men were taken to Constantinople as prisoners of war and their goods confiscated. It took many months for King Louis to negotiate their release.

The King and Queen eventually made their way to Sicily, where they were received as honored guests by King Roger. King Louis and King Roger shared stories about the treachery of the Byzantines. King Roger declared the Byzantines needed to be punished for their role in the failure of the Second Crusade, and King Louis wholeheartedly agreed. King Roger then convinced King Louis that another Crusade was needed, this time against the Byzantine Empire. Of course, this strategy would serve King Roger's interests very well.

When King Louis returned to Europe, he did his best to convince the Pope and Bernard of Clairvaux that the Byzantines had caused the failure of the Second Crusade, and that they needed to be punished. The Church was lukewarm about the concept, but the one man whom King Louis needed to convince to get the campaign against Constantinople up and running could not be swayed, King Conrad. Any major military campaign needed the support of the Germans if it were to succeed, and King Conrad was having none of it. His new alliance with Emperor Manuel was rock solid. King Roger's cunning plan to defeat the Byzantines failed, for the moment, at least.

Talking of the Church and of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, what was their reaction to the failure of the Crusade which they had initiated? The collapse of the military campaign, which had been so heavily promoted by the Church and had caused so many thousands of Christian deaths for no gain whatsoever, was a heavy blow. It was difficult to put a positive spin on the whole misadventure. Really, it's hard to overstate the massive psychological blow caused by the failure of the Second Crusade to the Christians of Europe. They had believed that God had called them to battle on his behalf against the Muslims in the Holy Land, yet disaster had beset them every step of the way. As a result, the very concept of crusading and of holy war was called into question.

Of course, people started looking for scapegoats. Clearly, the Byzantines were a handy target in this regard. Some blamed the Crusaders themselves as falling short of the moral

and religious standards required, and some blamed women, believing that God was displeased that so many women had accompanied the soldiers.

Both Bernard of Clairvaux and Pope Eugenius suffered a loss of prestige, and were openly criticized by their followers. Bernard issued a document called "De Consideratione", which was a written apology for the role played by himself and the Church in the whole affair. Bernard's reputation survived, but many Christians were left pondering how God moves in mysterious ways.

Bishop Otto of Freising, who led the German non-combatants across Anatolia, elegantly stated that the Crusade had produced dust and ashes and a time of weeping. But Bishop Otto was philosophical about the whole affair, stating, and I quote "although it was not good for the enlargement of boundaries or for the advantage of bodies, yet it was good for the salvation of souls" end of quote. At least, according to the Bishop, through their suffering and death the souls of many Crusaders were redeemed. And this really was the only positive way to look at the outcome of the Second Crusade for the European Christians.

How did the failure of the Second Crusade affect the Latin Christians in the Crusader states? The rulers of the Crusader states had sought European assistance to force the Muslims out of Edessa. They had been provided with thousands of European knights and soldiers, yet had failed to achieve anything with them. Particularly in the northern Crusader states, the County of Edessa and the Principality of Antioch, this meant that they were now on their own. There was no point calling for assistance. Their previous call had been answered, yet it had led to nothing. They would just have to fend for themselves.

For Count Joscelin, this meant signing a truce with Nur ad-Din. What remained of the County of Edessa was being attacked, not only by Nur ad-Din's forces from Aleppo, but also by the Seljuk Turks. The truce only lasted a year or so. In April 1150, as Jocelyn was riding to Antioch he was captured by a group of Turks, who were keen to hold him for ransom. Nur ad-Din heard of the capture and sent a force to take Joscelin from his capturers. Joscelin was taken to Aleppo, where he was imprisoned and possibly blinded. He died in captivity nine years later. Nur ad-Din attacked Turbessel soon after Joscelin's capture. Joscelin's wife, Countess Beatrice, effectively oversaw the defense of the city, and the Muslim forces retreated.

But Countess Beatrice was a realist and saw that the future for the County of Edessa was looking grim. The Count had been imprisoned. The County was under threat from both the Seljuk Turks and the Muslims from Aleppo, and to top it all off, the Jacobite Christians had started to rebel. Countess Beatrice made preparations to abandon her County and move her family to safer territory. Emperor Manuel heard of her plight and made a rather surprising move. He offered to buy the County of Edessa. Countess Beatrice sensibly contacted Jerusalem for advice, and after much discussion King Baldwin agreed to let the sale go through. The sale was formalized at Antioch. The Byzantine governor brought bags of gold to the capital, and in return Countess Beatrice formally handed over the main Christian fortresses in the County to the Byzantine Empire. The King's men then traveled to the County and escorted any Christian residents who didn't like the sound of Byzantine rule back to Antioch.

In the end, Emperor Manuel should have kept his bags of gold. The County of Edessa fell to the Muslims less than a year later. One of the Crusader states, the first to be created by

the Latin Christians, ceased to exist. Countess Beatrice eventually moved to Jerusalem, where she settled with her two children, Joscelin and Agnes.

The neighboring Principality of Antioch also suffered in the aftermath of the failure of the Second Crusade. Like the County of Edessa, the territory came under threat from Nur ad-Din, who sent forces to battle the Christians from his nearby capital, Aleppo. It also was in the sights of Mas'ud, the Seljuk Turk Sultan. No longer able to conduct raids in Anatolia and Cilicia due to the peace treaty he formalized with the Byzantine Empire, Mas'ud decided to focus on the Crusader states instead. Under attack from two fronts, Raymond Prince of Antioch formed an unlikely alliance. He joined forces with the current chief of the Assassins. Remember the Assassins? They're hard to forget. We met them back in Episode 24.

Anyway, the chief of the Assassins, a Kurdish man named Ali ibn-Wafa, decided that his hatred of the Muslims of Aleppo was greater than his hatred of the Christians, and as such was happy to join with the Christians to fight Nur ad-Din's army. Mas'ud the Seljuk Turk Sultan sent forces to attack Mar'ash, a city within the Principality of Antioch. Prince Raymond readied his army to prepare for a confrontation. By this time, Mas'ud and Nur ad-Din had formed an alliance, which of course was very bad news for the Latin Christians. The alliance was sealed when Nur ad-Din married Mas'ud's daughter. Anyway, as Raymond was preparing his army to confront Mas'ud, Mas'ud sent word to Nur ad-Din asking him to create a diversion. Nur ad-Din was happy to oblige, and sent his army out to raid villages on the road from Antioch to Mar'ash. But things didn't go Nur ad-Din's way. Two of his commanders quarreled and one refused to take part in the battle. Prince Raymond, with the assistance of the Assassins, pushed the Muslim forces back, and they retreated to Aleppo.

Around six months later, Nur ad-Din tried again. His forces clashed with the army of Prince Raymond at Bagr'ash, close to the site of his previous retreat. This time, the Muslims prevailed. Nur ad-Din then moved to besiege the fortress of Inab. Prince Raymond hastily gathered his forces and, together with a contingent of Assassins led by their chief, Ali ibn-Wafa, made his way to Inab. At the approach of the Christian army, Nur ad-Din withdrew from Inab to assess the situation. It wasn't a complete retreat. He just wanted to assess the size of the Christian forces and wait for an opportunity to launch a counter attack.

Prince Raymond mis-read the situation. Believing that the Muslim forces had fled, he set up camp on an open plain in a hollow by the Fountain of Murad, instead of taking his army to a more secure location. It was a costly mistake. During the night, Nur ad-Din's forces surrounded the camp, and at dawn they attacked. A confusing battle ensued. Consisting mainly of desperate hand to hand fighting, the confusion was made worse when the wind whipped up clouds of dust, making it difficult to see. Raymond attempted to charge his way out of the hollow using his cavalry, but the terrain and the dust prevented him. Surrounded and outnumbered, many Christians fled the field, but Raymond and the chief of the Assassins fought on. In the end, it was to no avail.

Nur ad-Din scored a decisive victory. He didn't realize the extent of his success until some time after the battle. Once the dust settled, his men scoured the battlefield, picking over the bodies for booty. The Muslim fighters found three corpses of significance. Reynald, the leader of Mar'ash, Ali ibn-Wafa, the chief of the Assassins, and Raymond Prince of Antioch. The Prince was lying stretched out amongst the bodies of his guards and knights.

The Muslim soldiers who discovered the body cut off Raymond's head and presented it to Nur ad-Din. Apparently, Nur ad-Din had the head sealed within a silver trophy case and then sent it to his spiritual leader, the Caliph of Baghdad, as a gift.

So in the aftermath of the Second Crusade, we have the Count of Edessa imprisoned, and the County of Edessa, one of the Crusader states, eradicated. We have the Prince of Antioch killed, leaving the Principality of Antioch leaderless and vulnerable. Raymond did have a successor, Bohemond III, but he was only five years old at the time of his father's death, and clearly too young to rule. We have the faith of the European Christians in the very idea of crusading shaken to the core, and we have the Muslims in the Middle East sensing that the Latin Christians are a foe that can be beaten. All in all, it was not a good outcome for a military campaign.

The post-script to the Second Crusade goes to young Bertrand of Toulouse. Bertrand is the illegitimate son of the Count of Toulouse Alfonso Jordan, who died a sudden and mysterious death in Caesarea shortly after his arrival in the Holy Land. Now, after the Europeans who had been involved in the Second Crusade departed from the Middle East and returned to Europe, Bertrand decided to stay. As far as I can ascertain he was the only member of the European nobility to do so. As everyone else was boarding ships and waving goodbye to the Kingdom of Jerusalem, Bertrand, his sister, and a contingency of men from Languedoc marched northwards. They traveled out of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and made it seem as though they had decided to seek a passage back to Europe from one of the less busier, northern ports. But as he was traveling through the County of Tripoli, he and his men suddenly left the road and seized the castle of Arima.

Now, Arima wasn't a very big castle, but it was situated in a handy strategic position. It had been built on a steep, isolated ridge overlooking the plains of Tripoli to the east and south, and could be used to control passage on the road from the city of Tripoli to Tortosa. Why did Bertrand of Toulouse make this surprising move? Well, basically, to avenge his father's death. Like most people, Bertrand believed that Alfonso Jordan died from poison at the hands of Count Raymond of Tripoli. Bertrand decided that it was time Count Raymond was punished for his crime. Whether Bertrand's aim was merely to occupy the castle of Arima and annoy Count Raymond, or whether he dreamt of somehow invading the rest of Tripoli with his small and ill-prepared band of followers and installing himself as the new Count, we will never know.

So what did Count Raymond do about the bothersome Bertrand? Well, he decided that he wouldn't give Bertrand the satisfaction of battling his own troops, instead he would call for outside assistance. Raymond knew it was pointless asking the neighboring Kingdom of Jerusalem or the Principality of Antioch for help, as they were not convinced of Raymond's innocence in the whole affair, and their sympathies lay squarely with Bertrand, so he sent an envoy to Unur of Damascus. Unur was only too happy to oblige. Unur took the opportunity to invite Nur ad-Din to assist in the enterprise, and Muslim troops from both Damascus and Aleppo headed towards the castle of Arima.

For Unur this was a brilliant opportunity to rebuild alliances after the shock of having his city attacked by the Christians. In responding to Tripoli's call for help, he was re-establishing ties with the Crusader states. By inviting Nur ad-Din to join in, he was also acknowledging the fact that Nur ad-Din came to Damascus' aid in its time of need, and that a new alliance was being forged between the former Muslim foes.

Faced with the combined might of the two Muslim armies, Bertrand and the troops from Languedoc didn't hold out for very long. The castle was stormed. Latin Christian lives were lost. Bertrand and his sister were taken prisoner, along with the other surviving Franks, and the castle was destroyed. Bertrand and his sister were taken to Aleppo, where they spent twelve years in captivity. According to some sources, Bertrand's sister married Nur ad-Din and gave birth to his son. Other sources have her joining Nur ad-Din's harem in Aleppo.

And that pretty much sums up the Second Crusade. Ill-prepared Latin Christians, with high ideals having little basis in reality, failing spectacularly in the Holy Land. Join me next week as we start to explore the intervening period between the Second and the Third Crusade. I will also aim to do some specialist episodes before we tackle the Third Crusade, examining in more detail the castle of Crac de Chevaliers, and looking at the lives of King Richard the Lionheart and the Muslim warrior Saladin. Until next week, bye for now.

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