

History of the Crusades.
Episode 52
The Fall of Jerusalem.

Hello again. Last week we saw Saladin's army score a decisive victory at the battle of Hattin. This week we'll examine the fallout from that battle.

We've already seen what happened to the leaders of the Christian army. Raymond of Tripoli was able to escape the fighting, along with Balian of Ibelin. Raynald of Chatillon was beheaded, while the other leaders, including King Guy, were taken to Damascus as prisoners. The revered True Cross was also taken to Damascus, symbolically inverted, and tied to a lance. The rank and file members of the Christian Army who had survived the battle were rounded up to be sold at the slave markets. There were so many of them that prices fell dramatically. One Muslim fighter was able to exchange one of the Christians he had escorted to the slave markets for a pair of sandals. The dead were left on the battlefield. A Muslim traveler who passed by the village of Hattin a year later recorded that the land was covered with piles of bones, which could be seen even from a distance.

Most commanders would have let their soldiers rest for a few days after such a major victory. Not Saladin. Saladin had his eye on the main prize, the Kingdom of Jerusalem. He knew the Kingdom was vulnerable, as most of its able-bodied men had been killed or captured at Hattin. He wanted to work quickly to secure it before the remaining Christian citizens could regroup. Importantly, he wanted to conquer a functioning Kingdom. As much as possible he wanted the tradesmen and merchants to remain in place, and he gave his men strict instructions not to plunder, kill, or rape the conquered people.

The day after the battle of Hattin, Saladin approached the nearby town of Tiberias, where Lady Eschiva was still barricaded inside the citadel. Realizing it was pointless to hold out any longer, Raymond of Tripoli's wife surrendered the city to Saladin. Saladin allowed her, along with her household, to leave the city and travel to Tripoli with his guarantee of safe conduct. The people of Tiberias were allowed to gather their possessions and leave the city, or they could choose to stay, so long as they were prepared to pay a tax to their new Muslim rulers.

And that, in a nutshell, was the way Saladin approached his conquest of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. He divided his army up and immediately set them to work. Under the leadership of his trusted commanders, Saladin sent his forces out across the Kingdom. They were so numerous they covered the land like a swarm of ants, according to one Latin Christian chronicler. One by one, the poorly garrisoned Christian towns surrendered to the might of the Muslim army.

One result of Saladin's policy of letting people leave the conquered towns was that groups of refugees filled the roads. Carrying as many of their possessions as they could, most made their way to Jerusalem, or to one of the highly fortified coastal towns, from there, perhaps hoping to find passage on a boat sailing to Europe, or to make a stand against Saladin's forces.

As the Muslim army moved through the Holy Land, more and more towns fell under their control. Nazareth, Seforia, Haifa and Caesarea all surrendered without a fight. Balian of Ibelin's garrison at Nablus offered a token resistance, but surrendered after holding out for

two days. The coastal city of Acre at that time was the financial center of the Kingdom. A hub for traders, merchants, and commercial transactions, it was under the control of Joscelin of Courtenay when Saladin's army approached. Its citizens wanted to make a stand against the Muslims, but Joscelin wasted no time in surrendering the city, a move that was unpopular with the people of Acre, who displayed their displeasure by rioting and burning a couple of houses. Saladin was keen for the merchants and traders to remain to carry on their trade, but many decided to flee, taking as many of their possessions as they could with them. But they couldn't take everything. Left abandoned in Acre were warehouses full of silks, metals, jewels, and military equipment. These came under the control of Saladin's seventeen year old son, al-Malik al-Afdal, who was given the city by his father. Al-Afdal distributed the abandoned goods amongst his men.

As towns and cities across the Kingdom continued to fall, Saladin's brother al-Adil came up from Egypt on a mission to conquer the coastal city of Jaffa. Its citizens refused to surrender, so he laid siege to the city. Taking it eventually by force, he sent the entire population of the town into captivity, marching most of them to the slave markets at Aleppo.

As more and more of the Kingdom fell under Muslim control, Latin Christians who wished to flee from their Islamic conquerors were herded into an ever decreasing area. Eventually, most of them ended up in just two cities, Jerusalem and Tyre.

The ancient city of Tyre was located on the coast in the northern part of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Essentially, it was a fortified island, joined to the mainland by a causeway built by Alexander the Great. It was a formidable place, easily defended by a small garrison. Most of the survivors of the Battle of Hattin had fled here, led by Balian of Ibelin, who recognized the city as the one most likely to be able to defend itself against Saladin's forces. On his way up the coast, Saladin stopped at Tyre, but the city refused to surrender. He launched an attack, but the defenses easily held him back. Deciding for the moment not to waste any more time at Tyre, he continued northwards, accepting the surrender of the city of Beirut.

By the end of August, scarcely two months since his victory at Hattin, most of the Kingdom of Jerusalem was under Saladin's control. Holding out against him were a few isolated castles and the cities of Tyre, Ascalon, Gaza and Jerusalem. Saladin ordered his two most important prisoners, King Guy and Gerard, Grand Master of the Temple, to be brought to Ascalon. He then informed the citizens of Ascalon that the freedom of their King could be brought with their surrender.

But King Guy wasn't exactly the most popular person in the Kingdom at that time. If he was unpopular before, well now, after leading the Kingdom to a massive defeat at the Horns of Hattin, his popularity had plunged to new depths. He pleaded with the citizens of Ascalon to surrender so that he could walk free, and they met the demands and pleas of their King with insults and derision. The city refused to surrender, and Saladin ordered his forces to attack. The city put up stiff resistance, and two of Saladin's Emirs were killed in the ensuing battle. But the courage of the defenders must have earned the respect of Saladin. When the city capitulated a few days later, Saladin allowed any citizens who wished to do so to leave with their belongings. Not only did he allow them to leave unharmed, he provided an armed escort to take them to Egypt. They were provided with accommodation in Alexandria while they waited for transport to Europe.

Things went better for Saladin at Gaza. Possibly Gerard was more popular with the people. When Gerard demanded that the citizens of Gaza surrender to secure his release, they obeyed at once. With Gaza under Muslim control, Gerard was allowed to walk free, while King Guy was taken back into captivity. He was imprisoned at Nablus and was later taken to Latakia. Queen Sibylla was given permission to travel from Jerusalem to join him.

Right, so now the only cities left under Latin Christian control in the Kingdom of Jerusalem are Tyre and Jerusalem. Tyre, as we heard previously, had refused to surrender when Saladin passed by it the first time, but its commander, Balian of Ibelin, had left to go to Jerusalem to fetch his wife and children and bring them back to Tyre. For reasons we will discuss later, Balian remained in Jerusalem and didn't return. Without an experienced military man to command the town's defenses, it looked like Tyre would soon be joining all the others on the coast, and surrendering to Saladin. But a strange twist of fate prevented the city's capitulation, and that twist of fate came in the form of a man, Conrad of Montferrat.

Now, remember Queen Sibylla's first husband, William Longsword? He was the sickly young King Baldwin V's father, and he died a few months into his marriage. Well, Conrad of Montferrat is William Longsword's brother, and therefore King Baldwin V's uncle. He had been living in Constantinople, but was forced to leave the city after having been involved in a murder. Instead of heading straight back to France, he and his men decided to sail to the Holy Land to make a pilgrimage. Oblivious to the fact that Saladin had recently defeated the Latin Christians at the Battle of Hattin and was now in control of most of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, Conrad's ships sailed into the port of Acre. Surprised that the harbor bell didn't ring out, signaling the arrival of his ship, which had been the custom, he decided not to cast anchor. Instead, when a Muslim port authority boat pulled alongside, Conrad asked what was happening. Upon being told that Saladin had taken Acre, Conrad immediately set sail for Tyre.

Conrad was a confident, energetic, ambitious, and ruthless soldier. He was welcomed at Tyre, and he quickly took over the defense of the city. He realized that the city's natural defenses could be utilized to make it a formidable defensive stronghold, and when Saladin passed by again on his way to Jerusalem asking for the city's surrender, Conrad, on behalf of the city, refused.

Now, Conrad's father had fought in the battle at the Horns of Hattin, and had been taken prisoner. Saladin knew that Tyre would be difficult to take by force. The Latin Christians had taken the city from the Muslims back in 1124 only after a six month long siege, involving both naval and land-based blockades. Saladin didn't have six months to spare. He had his eyes on the main prize, Jerusalem itself. So he ordered Conrad's father to be brought from the prisons of Aleppo to the city of Tyre. He paraded the old man up and down the walls outside the city, threatening to kill him unless Conrad surrendered. Conrad was unmoved, and Saladin, in a gesture which was increasingly becoming part of his *modus operandi*, spared the old man's life.

Not wanting to waste any more time on Tyre Saladin moved on. History has shown us that this was probably a mistake on Saladin's behalf. When he next returned to Tyre in November 1187, Conrad had strengthened the city's fortifications, and its defenses had been further bolstered by the arrival of more Christian defenders who traveled to the town by land and sea, making it much more difficult to take. But Saladin didn't have the benefit

of hindsight, and back in September 1187 he left Tyre to continue his subjugation of the Christian Kingdom.

Now I mentioned that Balian of Ibelin had left Tyre to travel to Jerusalem. What transpired was this. Balian was concerned about the fate of his wife and children, who were in Jerusalem. He wished to go to Jerusalem to collect them and bring them back to Tyre, but clearly the road between Tyre and Jerusalem was a dangerous one at present, and as one of the Latin Christian leaders, it would be likely that Balian would be attacked by Muslim forces on his journey. Balian didn't want to risk his wife and children being harmed or captured so, knowing that Saladin was a man of honor, he requested that he and his family be granted safe passage for the journey. Saladin informed Balian and that his request would be granted on two conditions: firstly, that he stay only one night in Jerusalem; and secondly that he remained un-armed for the duration of the journey. Balian agreed and left Tyre to travel to Jerusalem.

Once in Jerusalem, Balian and found the city panicked and in a state of chaos. There was no one really there taking charge of the city's defenses. Patriarch Heraclius, a person utterly un-qualified for the job, was trying unsuccessfully to prepare the city for Saladin's approach, and the noblemen and the citizens alike begged Balian to stay and take charge. Balian found he couldn't refuse. Terribly embarrassed by the fact that he had broken his promise to Saladin, he wrote to the Muslim commander, explaining what had transpired. Saladin forgave him. Not only that, Saladin arranged for the safe escort of Balian's wife and children, together with their household attendants and all the possessions they could carry, back to Tyre.

So, Balian's task was now to prepare the defense of the Holy City of Jerusalem. He didn't have an awful lot to work with. The city was swollen to bursting point with refugees from across the Kingdom. For every man present in the city, there were at least fifty women and children. The annihilation of the Kingdom's soldiers and knights in the Battle of Hattin meant that there were hardly any experienced military men in the city. In fact, he found only two knights present. To defend the city, he needed two things: He needed an army; and he needed to stock the city with enough food and supplies to withstand a lengthy siege. So he set about creating himself an army. He knighted every man and boy over the age of sixteen in the city of noble birth, creating for himself a contingent of knights, albeit a very inexperienced one. He gathered as much military equipment as he could, and armed every man in Jerusalem who was capable of wielding a sword or other weapon. He sent groups of citizens outside the city walls to collect as much food as they could find, before Saladin's army approached. Then he waited for the inevitable.

He didn't have long to wait. On the 20th of September 1187 Saladin's army arrived at the Holy City. He set up camp outside the city walls and ensured that the city was surrounded. He engaged his siege engines and began pummeling the walls to the north and northwest. Jerusalem was a well-fortified city, and its walls were thick and strong. After five days of unsuccessful attacks, Saladin ordered his men to change their approach. Saladin moved his tent to the Mount of Olives, and the Muslims began to undermine the wall near the Gate of the Column, not far from where Godfrey de Bouillon had broken into the city, 88 years ago.

Three days later, their work paid off, when the wall began to weaken and was breached. The defenders of the city, under Balian's command, did their best to prevent the Muslim fighters from entering the city, but it was pretty clear to the Latin Christians that all was

lost. In a desperate move, mothers cut their children's hair in penance and processions of barefoot, praying Christians made their way around the streets of Jerusalem, praying for divine assistance.

The following day, Balian bowed to the inevitable, and went out to meet Saladin in his tent to discuss terms of surrender. Now, at this discussion, emotions were running pretty high. Jerusalem was a mighty prize, not so much in a strategic sense, but in a spiritual one. Uncharacteristically, Saladin's initial response to Balian's request for terms was to state that he would take the city by force, showing no mercy, unless it unconditionally surrendered. Saladin reminded Balian of the actions of the Latin Christians when they conquered the city in 1099 and the ensuing slaughter. Balian responded in kind, stating that unless Saladin came to terms which were acceptable, then he would order that everything in the city be destroyed. The Christians threatened to kill all the Muslim prisoners within the city, after which they would then dismantle the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque, stone by stone, destroying the places within Jerusalem sacred to the religion of Islam. After this initial fiery start to negotiations, things seemed to proceed more smoothly.

Eventually, a compromise was reached. Balian would surrender the city, and Saladin agreed that the Latin Christian citizens of the city could pay a ransom for their release, at the rate of ten coins per man, five coins per woman and two coins for each child. Balian was concerned that this would adversely affect the poorer citizens, some for whom the amount of twenty coins was equivalent to a year or two's wages. Saladin agreed that if Balian paid 30,000 coins, this would cover the ransom for 7,000 of Jerusalem's poorest Christians. The treaty was finalized and Balian ordered the keys to the city be taken out and presented to Saladin.

On the 2nd of October 1187 Saladin made his triumphant entrance into the city. The date was a symbolic one, as it was the anniversary of the Prophet Mohammed's night journey from Jerusalem into heaven. The entrance of the Muslim fighters into the city was in stark contrast to that of the Latin Christians, 88 years earlier. There was no destruction, no looting, and no massacre. Almost immediately after the Muslims entered the city, a small group raced to the Dome of the Rock, upon which the Christians had placed a large golden cross. To cries of "Allahu akbar", or "God is great", the Muslims climbed to the top of the Dome and dismantled the cross, throwing it to the ground.

The Latin Christian citizens of the city were allowed to pay their ransom and leave. Those who couldn't pay were sold into slavery. Patriarch Heraclius paid his 10 coins, then loaded his cart up with as many expensive treasures as he could find. Carpets, gold chalices and ornate objects from the Church found their way into the Patriarch's possession, and Saladin's men let him pass out of the city with his treasures unharmed.

The refugees formed themselves into three groups, one under the leadership of the Templars, one under the Hospitallers, and one under Balian and the Patriarch Heraclius. They made their way to the only Latin Christian stronghold left in the Kingdom, the city of Tyre. However, the city was already overrun with refugees and only fighting men were permitted to enter and remain. The columns of refugees made their weary way northwards, with most settling in the County of Tripoli or the Principality of Antioch.

Eventually, the momentous news made its way to Europe. Jerusalem had fallen. The news was shocking, so shocking that it sparked the Kings of Europe into action. Preparations

began for another Crusade. Join me next week as we begin a new set of episodes, on the Third Crusade. Until next week, bye for now.

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