

History of the Crusades.
Episode 66
The Third Crusade XIV.

Hello again. Last week we saw King Guy depart for his new home on Cyprus, we saw Conrad of Montferrat assassinated, and saw Henri of Champagne marry Isabella and take up the crown of the King of Jerusalem. It was a big week last week. This week we see the Crusaders try to take Jerusalem again.

Now, a few things have changed since Richard last marched to Jerusalem. Ascalon has been largely rebuilt, and with the fall of the Muslim port of Darum, the Latin Christians have effective control over a significant part of the coast. There is a new sense of unity and optimism amongst the Crusaders under the leadership of the new King of Jerusalem, Henri of Champagne. And the weather is better. It's now the beginning of summer instead of the beginning of winter, as was the case when Richard last marched on Jerusalem.

So it was with a mixture of enthusiasm and confidence that the Crusaders set out from Ascalon on the 7th of June 1192 and headed inland towards Jerusalem. There was no need to stop and rebuild the fortified towns that Richard had used as stepping stones and supply lines this time round, so instead of taking two months to reach Beit Nuba, the Crusaders completed the march in just five days.

So here they are again in the little town of Beit Nuba, only twelve miles from Jerusalem. Once in Beit Nuba, did the Crusaders march the extra twelve miles to the Holy City and complete their mission? No, they did not. Richard and the local Latin Christians shared the same concerns as last winter. They were worried about their ability to take Jerusalem, and if that concern could be overcome, then they were worried about their ability to hold the city and defend it against Muslim counterattacks. So Richard bided his time in Beit Nuba, leading scouting parties out on reconnaissance missions, engaging in skirmishes with small groups of Muslim fighters, pondering how on earth he was going to attack the Holy City, and waiting for King Henri to travel to Beit Nuba from Acre with reinforcements.

On one reconnaissance mission, Richard rode over the top of a hill and glimpsed the distant towers, walls, and buildings of the city of Jerusalem. Reportedly, Richard raised his shield in front of his eyes, not wanting to gaze upon the city until he had taken it in the name of Christianity.

Saladin too was playing a waiting game. Bunkered down in the city of Jerusalem, his strategy at this point in time was one of endurance. Still reeling from his succession of military failures, worried about the unrest in Mesopotamia caused by the death of his nephew, Taqi ad-Din, and in a fragile state of health, Saladin knew that he just had to somehow endure any attacks by the Latin Christians. Eventually, King Richard and the bulk of the Crusading army would return to Europe, and that day was a day which Saladin was very much looking forward to. Until then, he had to play a safe defensive game, and try to keep his much of his hard-won territory as possible in Muslim hands.

On the 22nd of June, Saladin's scouts reported that Richard had left Beit Nuba with a force of around 700 knights and 1,000 foot soldiers. The strange thing was, the scouts reported to Saladin, he wasn't headed towards Jerusalem at all. In fact, the scouts had no idea where Richard could be heading. Saladin, however, had an idea, and that idea left him

seriously concerned. For some time, he had been awaiting the arrival of a supply caravan from Egypt. This wasn't just your average supply caravan, it was a massive affair containing military equipment, supplies of food, medicines, and thousands of camels and horses.

Saladin was right to be concerned. Richard had indeed been following the progress of the caravan, apparently with the aid of three Bedouin spies. The caravan had left the coast and turned towards Beersheba along a popular caravan route. The members of the caravan had set up camp at the base of the Judean Hills. On the 24th of June they were preparing for a dawn start when Richard and his men attacked, taking them totally by surprise. The caravan's military escort were quickly overpowered, and Richard seized the caravan and all its goods. The haul was impressive. While most of the military escort escaped, some 500 Muslim men were taken captive by the Crusaders. The goods from the caravan contained precious spices, gold, silver and silks, as well as plentiful supplies of food in the form of biscuits, wheat, flour, sugar, pepper, and cinnamon. Medicines and potions were seized, as well as a vast store of armor and weapons. Possibly the most significant loss from Saladin's point of view were the thousands of camels, horses and mules which fell into Christian hands.

Following this victory for the Crusaders, Saladin was convinced that an attack on Jerusalem was imminent. He ordered his men to prepare the defenses and took the drastic step of poisoning or destroying all the wells and water sources surrounding the Holy City. So sure was Saladin that Richard's army was about to attack, and so worried was he, that buoyed by the extra resources from the Muslim caravan the Latin Christians would actually succeed, that he made preparations to leave the Holy City for his own safety. At Friday prayers in the Al-Aqsa mosque, Saladin wept openly, his tears falling onto his prayer rug.

However, later that evening, his scouts approached him with some surprising news. The Crusader camp at Beit Nuba seemed to be in a state of confusion. The message Saladin was given stated that during the day the enemy all mounted up, stood in the field on horseback, and then returned to their tents. The scouts were ordered back to the Latin Christian camp to see if they could find out what the Crusaders were up to. The next day, what they were up to became apparent. On the 4th of July 1192, five years to the day since the Battle at the Horns of Hattin, the Crusading army struck camp and retreated away from Jerusalem, back to Ramla. Saladin was both delighted and astonished. He rode out with his Emirs to a hill outside Jerusalem, where he watched the long line of the Latin Christian soldiers retreating into the distance.

So, what happened? Well, Richard decided that an attack on Jerusalem would not succeed and told his men that sure, they could attack Jerusalem, but they would be doing so without him as commander. He did not want to be known to history as the King who was defeated trying to take Jerusalem. Richard's concerns were as follows. Despite gaining piles of food, horses, weapons, and armor when they seized the caravan, the one thing they didn't have was water, and in the height of the Middle Eastern summer, that was going to be a problem. Richard knew that Saladin had destroyed all the water sources outside the city, and that alone was giving Richard cause for concern. Richard was also worried that if he attacked Jerusalem, al-Adil and al-Afdal would return from Mesopotamia with reinforcements, trapping the Crusaders against the walls of the Holy City. And finally there was his old concern. Even if they managed to take Jerusalem, how would they be

able to hold it once the European Crusaders returned home? So his decision was made, and no amount of persuading or arguing from his men could make him change his mind.

The question now was, should the attack proceed anyway, without Richard? A war committee was convened, comprising five Templars, five Hospitallers, five barons from the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and five French noblemen. The French representatives urged the committee to proceed with the attack on the Holy City, but in the end they were overruled. A decision was made to withdraw back to Jaffa. Much to the disappointment and despair of the rank-and-file members of the army, the Crusaders turned their back on the Holy City and made their way back to the coast. It was a decisive point in the history of western intervention in the Middle East. There wouldn't be a western army this close to Jerusalem again until December 1917, when General Edmund Allenby captured Jerusalem for the British during World War One.

So now the momentum has swung Saladin's way. By this stage, it was pretty clear that both Saladin and Richard had had enough. Both were unwell; both had problems elsewhere in their realms that they needed to deal with; and both just wanted this whole Third Crusade caper to be wrapped up as soon as possible. So the stage was set for another round of peace negotiations, with Saladin in a commanding position.

New to the role of King, and perhaps over-estimating his importance in the scheme of things, King Henri of Jerusalem decided to open the peace negotiations, two days after the retreat, with a brash, arrogant, and totally inappropriate offer. He sent a messenger to Saladin, demanding the immediate return of all the lands in his Kingdom (by that he meant the former Kingdom of Jerusalem) in return for well, nothing. Saladin was so infuriated by this demand, by a side which had just retreated, that the messenger was lucky to escape unharmed. Once Saladin had his temper back under control, he responded to the demand by telling Henri that keeping Tyre and Acre was the best the so-called King of Jerusalem could hope for.

A few days later, Saladin received an embassy from Richard, asking Saladin to forgive the wayward young King, and requesting a more realistic agreement. Negotiations went back and forth. Saladin was prepared to treat Henri of Champagne as a son, to allow Latin Christian priests to visit Jerusalem, and to cede the coast to the Crusaders, but the sticking point between the two sides was the city of Ascalon. Saladin, knowing the city's strategic importance to his empire in Egypt, was adamant that the city either be ceded to him or be dismantled again. Richard, having spent so much manpower and money rebuilding Ascalon, and wanting to keep the coast Muslim-free, refused.

Despite Ascalon appearing as a roadblock along the path to peace, Richard seemed assured that a treaty was imminent. He pulled his army out from Jaffa and headed to Acre, where he began preparations to leave the Holy Land.

For Saladin, the unprotected city of Jaffa was too much of a temptation. He was less certain than Richard that the peace talks would result in something concrete, so on the 27th of July he moved his army out of Jerusalem and attacked the city of Jaffa.

To say that the city's Latin Christian garrison was surprised by this move was an understatement. They were utterly unprepared for an attack by the massive Muslim army, and the best they could do was retreat to the citadel and attempt to surrender, while the Muslims pillaged and plundered their way through the town. The Patriarch of Jerusalem

happened to be in Jaffa at this time, and he conducted negotiations with Saladin, all the while hopeful that a message would reach Richard of the city's predicament. By this time, Saladin had lost control of some of his troops, the Turkish and Kurdish soldiers running rampant through the city streets. Saladin advised the garrison to remain locked down in the citadel until he managed to restore some order.

Meanwhile, a message had made its way to Richard. Shocked beyond belief at Saladin's brazen move, Richard sailed down the coast at the head of a fleet of fifty ships, to come to Jaffa's rescue. He also ordered a contingent of knights and bowmen to march down the coast to meet them at the city. Richard's ships were delayed by headwinds, so much so that the marching soldiers overtook the ships. Not wanting to arrive in Jaffa before their King and commander, the army waited in Caesarea for the ships to pass.

On the 31st of July, Saladin had finally pacified his men, to the extent that the garrison and their families could now be safely evacuated through the town. They were in the process of doing so when Richard's ships appeared. The garrison happily resumed fighting, while Richard waded ashore, personally leading around 2,000 Italian marines from the ships. They were joined by around 80 knights and 400 bowmen who had marched down the coast. The Latin Christians were heavily outnumbered, and were in a disadvantageous position, with the Muslims already having had a chance to consolidate their positions within the city. These factors, however, were not going to stop Richard.

The battle which took place at Jaffa cemented Richard's name in history as a legendary fighter and warrior. He led from the front and was everywhere, cutting down Muslim fighters with his sword, yelling encouragement to his men, and leaving everyone in awe at his fighting skills. Apparently, it wasn't at all uncommon for him to fell two men with one stroke of his sword, and a Muslim chronicler recorded how at one stage, Richard jumped on a horse and rode out alone into the Muslim lines, brandishing a lance and inviting the Muslims to attack him. In awe of this one-man Christian fighting machine, none of them did. Against all odds, Richard and his men cleared the town and the citadel of Muslims. Appalled by the fact that his men had been overcome by the much smaller Latin Christian army, Saladin ordered a counterattack, which again was successfully repulsed by Richard.

So Jaffa was back in Latin Christian hands. The situation was now crystal clear. The Latin Christians knew that they couldn't take Jerusalem, and the Muslims knew that they couldn't expel the Latin Christians from the coastal towns. A new round of peace negotiations began, but again Ascalon was the sticking point, with Richard insisting that both Ascalon remain in Latin Christian hands, and that he would remain in the Holy Land until next Easter. Then, in August 1192, Richard became seriously ill with a fever. He had been feeling unwell ever since he arrived in the Holy Land, and it seemed that his exertions at Jaffa had pushed his body over the edge. From his sick bed he made one final plea to al-Adil, who strangely was also laid low by illness near Jerusalem. He pleaded with al-Adil to intercede on his behalf with Saladin and let him keep Ascalon. Al-Adil passed the message on to Saladin, who refused to give in to Richard's demands, although he did send the King a gift of peaches and pears and snow from a distant mountain to cool his drinks.

On the 28th of August al-Adil's messenger delivered Saladin's final offer to Richard. It proposed that the Latin Christians keep the coastal cities as far south as Jaffa, and that Christian pilgrims be allowed to visit Jerusalem and other holy places. Muslims and Christians should be allowed to freely pass through each other's lands, but Ascalon had to

be demolished. Richard was feeling wretched, still racked by fever, and knowing that for the sake of his health and the sake of his Kingdom back home, he really needed to wrap things up as soon as possible. He signed the peace treaty five days later, on the 2nd of September 1192. Saladin signed the treaty the following day. The Third Crusade was over.

Strangely, Richard and Saladin still didn't meet. Richard was very ill when he signed the treaty. Apparently he didn't even have the energy to actually read the document, so maybe that contributed to the fact that the two great warriors of the Third Crusade failed to meet to sign their treaty. Once the treaty was finalized, the Latin Christians were free to visit Jerusalem, and many of them did so, fulfilling their vows to at least worship at the holy sites before returning to Europe. One delegation was even allowed to view the True Cross, which oddly had been left out of the treaty and remained in Muslim hands. Richard, however, did not make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Whether he was too ill to make the journey or whether he didn't want to set foot in the town he was unable to conquer is not known. He moved to Acre, and began preparations for his journey back to Europe.

So what did the Third Crusade achieve for the Latin Christians? Well, Tyre and Tripoli were already in Latin Christian hands at the beginning of the Third Crusade. By its end, the cities of Acre and Jaffa had been added to the Latin Christian collection, meaning that the Latin Christians now controlled a small strip of land which was less than 10 miles wide and around 90 miles long. This was to be the new Kingdom, still ruled by the King of Jerusalem despite the fact that Jerusalem was now in Muslim hands.

Throughout the campaign, Bohemond of Antioch had stayed neutral, and he managed to hold onto Antioch and a small piece of territory surrounding the city, which stretched down to the Port of St Symeon. Bohemond's son held Tripoli, while Crac de Chevaliers remained under the control of the Hospitallers and the Templars held Tortosa. This was the extent of the Latin Christian presence in the Holy Land after the Third Crusade. It was an endurable presence though, one which would last another hundred or so years.

And the cost? Well, Balian of Ibelin reportedly told a Muslim chronicler at the signing of the Treaty of Jaffa that he believed around 20% of the Crusaders had died in battle, but that many more had died of illness and other causes. He estimated that less than 50% of the original Crusading force had survived. One William of Newburgh, writing from northern England after the end of the Crusade, put the losses higher, at 70%, stating "not a quarter returned home".

What happened to King Richard and Saladin after the Third Crusade? Well, Richard, of course, wanted to hurry back to England. On the 29th of September, his wife Queen Berengaria and his sister Queen Joanna of Sicily, set sail for home and reached France safely. Richard no doubt hoped that his journey would be as quick and as uneventful, but he was to be disappointed.

His journey was the sort of thing that nightmares are made off. He left ten days after his wife and sister, sailing from Acre on the 9th of October 1192. His ship was hit by storms, which forced him to take shelter on the Greek island of Corfu, part of the Byzantine Empire controlled by Emperor Isaac Angelus. Worried that he might be recognized and taken prisoner, Richard disguised himself as a Templar knight, and along with four companions managed to buy passage on a pirate ship that was headed across the Adriatic Sea. Unfortunately, this ship fell victim to a spring storm and was shipwrecked near Aquileia.

Richard survived the experience, and having had enough of sea travel by this stage, decided to continue his journey overland.

Still disguised, although probably not very convincingly, as he was a very famous and distinctive looking person, Richard made his way into Austria, the territory of Duke Leopold. Do you remember Duke Leopold of Austria? The last time we came across him was in Episode 61. After the Latin Christians seized Acre, Duke Leopold attempted to claim part of the city on behalf of the German Crusaders, and raised his banner next to Richard's. The English tore Duke Leopold's banner down and trampled it into the dirt, an insult so grievous that he left the Holy Land and returned to Austria. So you can safely say that Duke Leopold is not a fan of King Richard.

You know what's going to happen next. Someone recognizes Richard at an inn in Vienna despite his cunning disguise, and he is arrested and taken before the Duke. The Duke accused Richard of the murder of Conrad of Montferrat and imprisoned him. Three months later, Richard was handed over to the Duke's overlord, Emperor Henry VI of Germany. Unfortunately, the Emperor was also not a fan of Richard, and kept him in captivity for another year, only releasing him after the payment of a massive ransom.

Upon his release, Richard spent the next five years fighting in France, defending his territory from King Philip, whilst also trying to quash the ambitions of his younger brother John in England. On the 26th of March 1199 he was killed by a stray arrow fired from a rebel inside a castle at Limousin in France.

Saladin's life was fated to draw to a close even faster than Richard's. Like Richard, he had been battling ill health for some time. He was 54 years old at the end of the Third Crusade and was ill and exhausted. He hoped to take some time off after the signing of the peace treaty, travel to Egypt, and then make a pilgrimage to Mecca, but duty called. He met with Bohemond of Antioch to settle a peace treaty with him, and then traveled to his administrative center, Damascus, where waiting for him, joy of joys, was a massive pile of paperwork. After four years out in the field on a military campaign, things had sort of built up, and there was enough work in Damascus to keep him occupied for quite some time.

As winter drew in, his health really began to fail, and he complained of fatigue and forgetfulness. He could barely concentrate enough to hold an audience with someone, and the endless pile of paperwork wasn't helping. At the end of winter, he gathered himself together and rode out to welcome a group of pilgrims returning from Mecca, but that evening he felt dangerously ill with a high fever. He took to his bed and never recovered. On the 3rd of March 1193, as the Koran was being read to him, the reader came to a passage which stated "There is no God but he. In him, I do trust." Saladin briefly opened his eyes, smiled, then died.

After his death, Saladin's territory fell victim to strife and family squabbles. His son al-Afdal and his brother al-Adil battled continuously against warring family members and factional leaders, and occasionally against each other, which basically meant that the Latin Christians were left to their own devices, which of course they welcomed.

So there we have it. We have completed our episodes on The Third Crusade. Over the next couple of weeks, we will be taking a break from the narrative to look at two specialist topics: "Christianity in the Crusader States" and "Life in the Crusader States". We will then follow the exploits of the Latin Christians in the reduced Kingdom in the Holy Land, before

turning northwards to Constantinople for the ill-famed Fourth Crusade. I hope you'll join me in the next stage of our journey. Until next week, bye for now.

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