

DE EXPUGATIONE TERRAE SANCTAE PER SALADINUM:

The Battle of Hattin, 1187

[Adapted from Brundage] Amid mutual hatred and distrust within their own ranks, the Latin barons faced the renewed Moslem attack. Raymond III of Tripoli and his friends stood opposed to the Latin King and his coterie. Raymond had, in fact, made an alliance with Saladin in order to protect the county of Tripoli against the possibility of Moslem invasion. Yet in this extremity, under grave pressure from the other Latin princes, Raymond and his party yielded and prepared to join the Christian army in defense of the Holy Land. Such a belated reunion, however, could not erase the distrust and bitterness engendered by recent events within the Latin states. By late June, 1187 the armies of the Latin King had assembled to face Saladin's onslaught.

In the year of the Lord's incarnation 1187, the King of Syria [Saladin] gathered together an army as numerous as the sands of the seashore in order to wage war on the land of Juda. He came up to the Jaulan, across the [Jordan] River, and there made camp.

The King of Jerusalem [Guy de Lusignan] also gathered his army from all of Judea and Samaria. They assembled and pitched camp near the springs at Saffuriyah. The Templars and Hospitallers also assembled many people from all their castles and came to the camp. The Count of Tripoli [Raymond III of Tripoli] likewise rose up with all his people, whom he collected from Tripoli and Galilee and came into the encampment. Prince Reginald of Montreal [Reginlad de Chatillon] also came with his people, as did Balian of Naples [Balian d'Ibelin] with his, Reginald of Sidon [Reginlald Garnier] with his, and the lord of Caesarea in Palestine [Walter Garnier] with his. Not a man fit for war remained in the cities, towns, or castles without being urged to leave by the King's order. Nor was this host sufficient. Indeed, the King of England's treasure [note: King Henry II of England had a few years earlier donated a considerable sum of money for the defense of the Holy Land. His treasury, which had been placed at the disposal of the military order, was now broken open and used to hire mercenaries to help throw back Saladin's attack.] was opened up and they gave a fee to everyone who could bear a lance or bow into battle. The army was quite large: 1,200 knights, innumerable Turcoples, and 18,000 or more infantry. They gloried in their multitude of men, the trappings of their horses, in their breastplates, helmets, lances, and golden shields, but they did not believe in God, nor did they hope in the salvation of him who is the protector and savior of Israel. Rather, they were taken up with their own thoughts and became vain.

They sent to Jerusalem to ask the Patriarch to bring the Holy Cross with him to the camp . . . so that they might become bearers and keepers of the Lord's cross.

Meanwhile, the Syrians crossed the Jordan. They overran and laid waste the area around the springs of Cresson, from Tiberias to Bethany . . . up to Nazareth and around Mount Tabor. Since they found the region deserted by men, who had fled out of fear of them, they set fire to the threshing floors and put everything they found into the flames. The whole region flamed in front of them like a ball of fire. Not satisfied even with this, they ascended the holy mount to the sacred spot on which our Savior, after the appearance of Moses and Elias, showed his disciples Peter, James, and John the glory of the future resurrection in his transfiguration. The Saracens defiled this place.

After these advance parties had wrought their destruction, Saladin and his whole army crossed the river. Saladin ordered his forces to push on to Tiberias and besiege it. On Thursday, July 2, the city was surrounded by archers and the battle was joined. The Countess [Eschiva, wife of Raymond III of Tripoli] and the Galileans, since the city was not fortified, sent messengers to the Count and King with the news: «The Turks have surrounded the city. In the fighting, they have pierced the walls and are just now entering against us. Send help at once or we shall be taken and made captive.»

The Syrians fought and won. When the Galileans saw they could not hold out, they yielded the ramparts and the city. They fled before the pagans into the castle, though the city was taken and burned. But since the King of Egypt [Saladin] heard that the Christian army was approaching against him, he was unable to besiege the castle. He said: «So be it! They are my prisoners.»

Toward evening on Thursday, July 2, the King of Jerusalem, after he had heard the Galileans' letter, called together all the leaders of the army so that they might give council concerning the action to be taken. They all advised that at dawn they should march out, accompanied by the Lord's cross, ready to fight the enemy, with all the men armed and arrayed in battle formation. Thus arrayed they would relieve the city of Tiberias. The Count of Tripoli, when he heard this, spoke: «Tiberias is my city and my wife is there. None of you is