

13th Century: 4th Crusade

Historical Theology

5/29/22

Bryan Meyer

INTRODUCTION/REVIEW

What was a crusade? Why was it called a crusade?

Literally: "the state of being marked with the cross"

Denotation: _____
under the banner of the cross.

Quote from the pope in 2004:

- Eight hundred years later, Pope John Paul II twice expressed sorrow for the events of the Fourth Crusade. In 2001, he wrote to Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens, "It is tragic that the assailants, who set out to secure free access for Christians to the Holy Land, turned against their brothers in the faith. The fact that they were Latin Christians fills Catholics with deep regret." In 2004, while Bartholomew I, Patriarch of Constantinople, was visiting the Vatican, John Paul II asked, "How can we not share, at a distance of eight centuries, the pain and disgust." This has been regarded as an apology to the Greek

Orthodox Church for the massacres perpetrated by the warriors of the Fourth Crusade.

Intent and Result

- "The stated intent of the expedition was to recapture the Muslim-controlled city of Jerusalem, by first defeating the powerful Egyptian Ayyubid Sultanate, the strongest Muslim state of the time. However, a sequence of economic and political events culminated in the Crusader army's 1202 siege of Zara and the 1204 sack of Constantinople, the capital of the Greek Christian-controlled Byzantine Empire, rather than Egypt as originally planned. This led to the partitioning of the Byzantine Empire by the Crusaders."

1201: Alexius, son of deposed Byzantine emperor Isaac II Angelus, escapes from prison and travels to Europe to seek help in recovering his throne.

1201: Even while negotiating with Europeans on a price for transporting Crusaders to Egypt, Venetians negotiate a secret treaty with the sultan of Egypt,

guaranteeing that nation against invasion. (Historically not 100% verifiable. At least from what I could find).

Pope Innocent III: Recently selected for the papacy and saw an opportunity to expand the church's power. He sent out a message to numerous countries asking for support in this crusade's effort. Spiritual redemption would be the result of this crusade, not material gain (land). The church funded this crusade. He believed the previous two crusades failed because of inadequate leadership. Papal legates were appointed. The church, then, became a military machine.

Land or Sea?

Funding? Did the church provide enough?
Venice to negotiate a loan

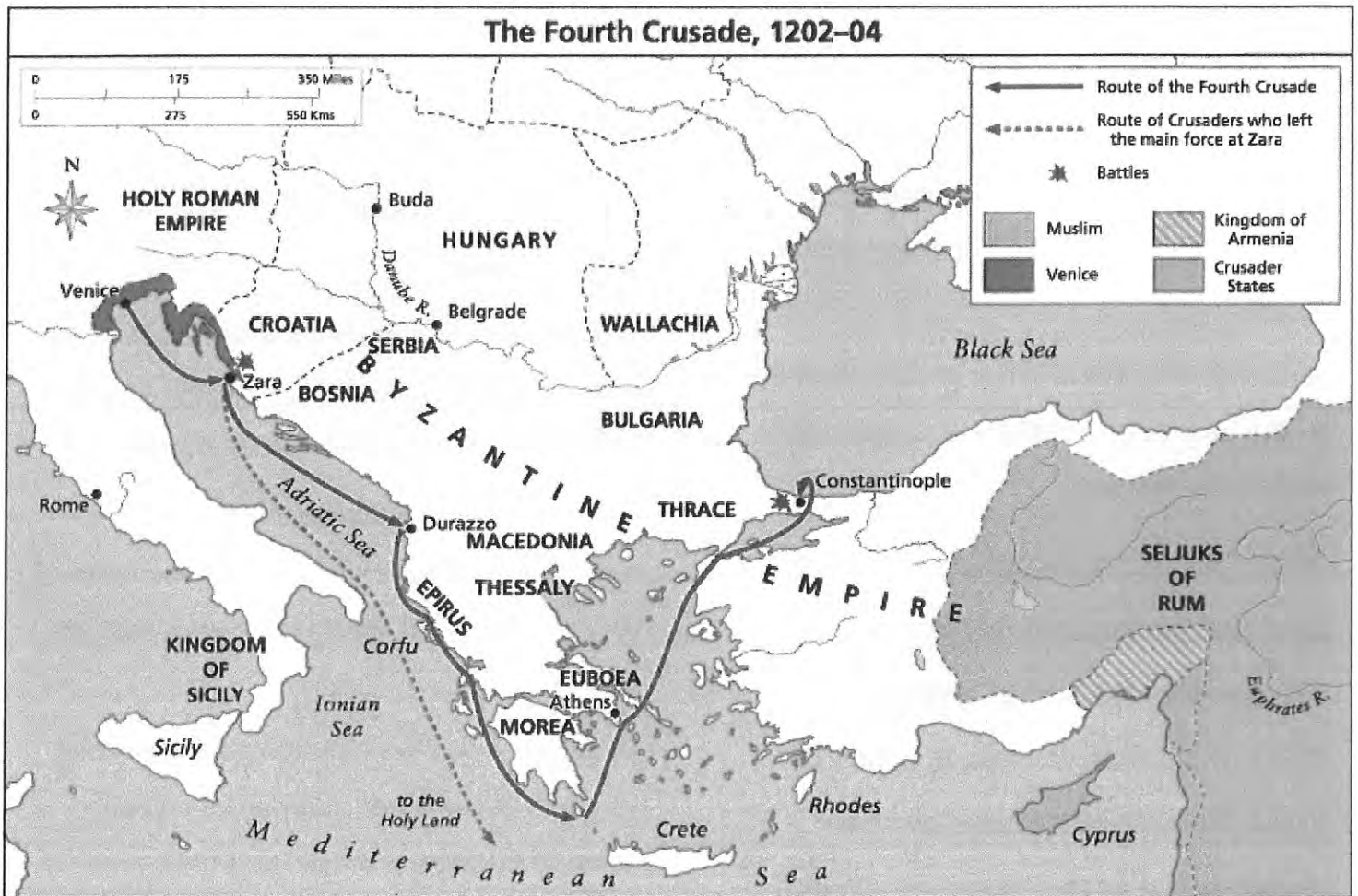
November 1202: Christians on the Fourth Crusade arrive at Venice in the hopes of being transported by ship to Venice, but they don't have the 85,000 marks required for payment so the Venetians, under doge Enrico Dandolo, barricade them on the island of Lido

until he figures out what to do with them. Eventually, he decides that they can make up the difference by capturing some cities for Venice.

The leaders of the crusades needed 34,000 marks because not enough crusaders showed up in Venice. While staying in Venice, waiting to take off for Egypt, the crusaders had to pay high prices for food/stay because the Venetians felt jaded and wanted to get back at the crusaders. They had fulfilled their side of the deal but the crusaders hadn't.

The crusaders came to a realization that they weren't going to be able to come up with the money so they had to re-negotiate.

November 24, 1202: After just five days of fighting, Crusaders capture the Hungarian port of Zara, a Christian city on the coast of Dalmatia. The Venetians had once controlled Zara but lost it to the Hungarians and offered passage to Egypt to the Crusaders in exchange for Zara. The importance of this port had been growing and the Venetians feared the rivalry from the Hungarians. Pope Innocent III is infuriated by this and excommunicates the



© 2002 Facts On File, Inc.

entire Crusade as well as the city of Venice, not that anyone seems to notice or care.

The Siege of Zara: To keep the deal alive, Venetian Doge Dandolo proposed that the crusaders help overtake Zara, an area that Venice had previously lost and wanted to win back. After that, they could continue their way to Egypt with no debt to Venice.

Zara=Christian city with a Christian leader, in fact, a previous Crusading King, King Emerick of Hungary.

The crusader leadership withheld from the rank and file soldiers that the pope had proclaimed they would be excommunicated from the church if they attacked Zara. Obviously, salvaging reputations and clearing debts was more important than spiritual redemption (albeit false redemption).

“When Innocent III heard of the sack, he sent a letter to the crusaders excommunicating them and ordering them to return to their holy vows and head for Jerusalem. Out of fear that this would dissolve the army, the leaders of the crusade decided not to inform their followers of this.”

Turns out, after the takeover of Zara, Venetian leaders determined that the crusaders' debt wasn't satisfied yet.

1203: Crusaders abandon the city of Zara and move on to Constantinople. Alexius Angelus, son of deposed Byzantine Emperor Isaac II, offers the Crusaders 200,000 marks and the reunification of the Byzantine Church with Rome if they capture Constantinople for him.

One of the crusader leaders, Boniface, met a man named Alexius Angelus who wanted the crusaders to overtake the imperial crown of Constantinople and place him as king. Once king, he would graciously give the crusaders the necessary funds to finally go to Egypt for their original intent. 200,000 silver marks was the sum. More than enough to fulfill the needs of the crusade. Alexius also promised more

military support once leader of Constantinople. Alexius was to overtake his uncle, which meant there would be conflict as his uncle wouldn't give up the throne easily.

Convincing the crusader soldiers to go to Constantinople:

12 Frenchmen out of the thousands wanted to go to Constantinople. *Greek orthodox, yes, but still Christians and we want to attack them?*

Crusader leaders argued that this was just a step in the process and would lead to where they wanted to go: Egypt to win back the Holy Land.

Because the soldiers were too poor, many had to stay with the larger crusader expedition. Some of the more wealthy spent their own resources to either travel to Egypt or go back home.

Before the crusaders left, they completely decimated Zara, leaving only the churches.

The leaders of the crusade met with some potential French noblemen defectors to beg them to stay with the crusade. Without these important crusaders, the leaders felt that the crusade wouldn't have the numbers to proceed.

Upon arrival in Constantinople, many of the soldiers were in awe of the magnificent city. What effect did that have on them, do you think?

Alexius III, Alexius Angelas's uncle, refused to give up the throne. The citizens of Constantinople also weren't huge fans of young Alexius. They honestly didn't know who he was and why he wanted to take over. The crusaders realized this experience wasn't going to be as easy as promised by the crusader leaders such as Boniface and Alexius. Fortunately, the Byzantine empire had no navy so the crusaders could attack from the water.

April 06, 1203: Crusaders launch an attack on the Christian city of Constantinople.

900 years and Constantinople had never fallen. Largest amphibious invasion in history at that time.

In short, the crusaders did overtake an out-skirting city by overtaking a key tower on the city's edge. This allowed them access to actually attack Constantinople.

Because Constantinople had no navy, the crusaders took their time analyzing where to attack.

July 17th, 1203: The First Siege of Constantinople was merely a small corner of the wall of Blackenate Palace, not a traditional siege where a whole area is surrounded and travel is inhibited.

Doge Dandolo, one of the leaders of the crusaders, eventually had enough of the stalemate and decided to run his men on the shore, rather than fight from their ships. This led a movement of other crusader ships to attack the shore.

Setting fire to a few buildings and a favorable wind led to a large part of the city being destroyed.

20,000 Constantinople citizens became homeless simply from the fire.

While a victory in one sense, the undersized crusader force now had to take on the Byzantine forces, who outnumbered the crusaders by 3:1.

Emperor Alexius III ordered his army to retreat. The crusaders' confidence was now bolstered at their "victory". Emperor Alexius III, essentially scared of being overthrown, fled the

empire and, as a result, the empire selected the former emperor, Isaac II (who is young Alexius's father) as the emperor again. What an opportunity for young Alexius (remember him?) to become the new co-emperor.

Was the deal complete? They had technically overthrown the emperor, but not replaced him with young Alexius yet.

July 17, 1203: Constantinople, capital of the Byzantine Empire, falls to Crusading forces from Western Europe. Deposed emperor Isaac II is freed and resumes rule alongside his son, Alexius IV, while Alexius III flees to Mosynopolis in Thrace. Unfortunately, there is no money to pay the Crusaders and the Byzantine nobility are infuriated at what happened. Thomas Morosini of Venice is installed as the patriarch of Constantinople, increasing the rivalry between Eastern and Western churches.

Isaac II, as the new emperor (again), had little support so he felt the best option was to make young Alexius co-emperor. This would gain him a crusader army and eliminate the conflict immediately.

Unfortunately, all the promises that young Alexius had made were too lofty. Essentially, he could fulfill the promises to the crusaders but only enough so they could pay off their debt.

The appeal and allure of Constantinople's wealth became the main focus of the soldiers. They felt that they should have some of that wealth because they did win the city, technically.

****Spiritual Redemption or Spoils of War?**

Young Alexius took valuable metals from the Greek church to restock the treasury (which had been depleted to pay the crusaders).

Each emperor neglected their role as co-emperor, sticking to their own circles of advisors and becoming combative toward one another.

Constantinople's citizens had had enough of both emperors: lost wealth, fire-destroyed sections of the city, and an invader crusader army who acted like they owned the city.

A meeting between Doge Dandolo and young Alexius about the lack of payment to the crusader forces didn't go well. This led the crusaders to essentially declare war on Constantinople.

Both young Alexius and Isaac II shirked their duties as leaders during the conflict. This led to Alexius's assassination and Isaac's either death by grief or assassination, too.

February 1204: The Byzantine nobility re-imprison Isaac II, strangle Alexius IV, and install Alexius Ducas Murtzuphlos, brother-in-law of Alexius III, on the throne as Alexius V Ducas.

With new leadership, the crusaders have no point in staying because they have no way of receiving their payment. The wise option would have been to simply go home. But nope! They decide to take over Constantinople's leadership in another coup.

Constantinople's new leadership proved to be really good and expecting the crusaders to attack in a similar manner as before, he fortified weak areas, built new massive towers, etc.

The Crusaders lost the first offensive attack on Constantinople but succeeded in their second offensive a few days later because of favorable winds and a few brave, heavily armored individuals. Once the crusaders were inside, the Constantinople citizens were very quick to retreat.

The emperor fled so the nobles had to find someone else to fill that role again.

April 11, 1204: After months of not being paid and infuriated at the

execution of their ally, Alexius III, soldiers of the Fourth Crusade once again attack Constantinople. Pope Innocent III had again ordered them not to attack fellow Christians, but the papal letter was suppressed by clergy on the scene.

April 12, 1204: The armies of the Fourth Crusade capture Constantinople again and establish the Latin Empire of Byzantium, but not before they sack the city and rape its inhabitants for three straight days - during Easter week. Alexius V Ducas is forced to flee to Thrace. Although Pope Innocent III protests at the behavior of the Crusaders, he does not hesitate to accept a formal reunion of the Greek and Latin churches.

May 16, 1204: Baldwin of Flanders becomes the first Latin Emperor of Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire and French is made the official language. Boniface of Montferrat, the leader of the Fourth Crusade, goes on to

**capture the city of Thessalonica
(second-largest Byzantine city) and
founds the Kingdom of Thessalonica.**

****As a side note, historians estimate that only
hundreds of crusaders ended up arriving in
Egypt or the Holy Land.**

Returning to the beginning, about the pope's
apology in 2004:

In April 2004, in a speech on the 800th
anniversary of the city's capture, Ecumenical
Patriarch Bartholomew I formally accepted the
apology. "The spirit of reconciliation is stronger
than hatred," he said during a liturgy attended
by Roman Catholic Archbishop Philippe
Barbarin of Lyon, France. "We receive with
gratitude and respect your cordial gesture for
the tragic events of the Fourth Crusade. It is a

fact that a crime was committed here in the
city 800 years ago."

Application:

Spiritual Redemption? Spoils of War? Works as
a result of our faith, not a means to gain
salvation.