

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Hollywood's Crusade Against History

Ridley Scott's blockbuster epic "*Kingdom of Heaven*" presents one of the worst distortions of history seen on any screen in recent years. Focusing on the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 1187 to Saladin's Muslim armies, this anti-Christian, politically-correct revisionism gets everything wrong.

Who Cares About Geography?

First of all, Scott's *Kingdom of Heaven* has its geography very wrong. We know that the film was shot in Spain and Morocco, and it shows. Most people should know that Jerusalem is **not** in the middle of the Sahara Desert! Yet, in his film Jerusalem's high walls are surrounded by sand dunes, without a tree, a bush or a blade of grass. The Mount of Olives, the Kidron Valley and the Valley of Hinnom are nowhere to be seen. Unlike the Crusaders who liberated Jerusalem in 1099, Saladin's Army has no problem moving his siege engines and assault towers right up to the walls of Jerusalem, because Scott's Jerusalem in *Kingdom of Heaven* is not surrounded by valleys or ditches.

This film also boldly asserts that Messina was the seaport to the Holy Land. As Messina is on the Island of Sicily, one wonders why French crusaders would, or how they could, depart from there. In fact Genoa, Venice and Naples were the ports which crusaders set sail from.

This is a True Story – Only the Facts Have Been Changed

Kingdom of Heaven also distorts history beyond all recognition. The "*hundred-year truce*" between the Christian and Muslim armies is a figment of their imagination. The warfare throughout the 12th Century was incessant.

The depiction of the Knights Templar as a band of religious fanatics trying to shatter the truce and provoke war with the Muslims by attacking caravans is a total fabrication. No Knights Templar ever attacked any caravans. Attacking caravans is what the founder of Islam, Muhammad, engaged in regularly as did his hand-picked apostles, the Caliphs. The Knights Templar Order was formed primarily to protect travelers from the attacks of the Muslim army. In fact it was the slaughter of Christian pilgrims, by Muslim armies, in violation of earlier agreements of safe passage that precipitated the Crusades in the first place.

The central figure of this film, Sir Balian, is a historical figure, who did in fact play a critical role in the defence of Jerusalem in 1187, but the film script distorts his character and role beyond all recognition. First of all, Balian was not a blacksmith, nor did his wife commit suicide, nor was he illegitimate, nor raised as a commoner. His father, Balian the Old (not Godfrey as in the movie), had three sons, all legitimate: Hugh, Baldwin and Balian. Balian never had to travel to the Holy Land, because he grew up as part of the nobility there. Balian was married to royalty long before the events portrayed in the film, and he was not at all romantically involved with the Princess Sibylla. (Although his brother, Baldwin, had some love interest in Sibylla).

In *Kingdom of Heaven*, Balian is portrayed as questioning whether God exists, although according to the historical records it is clear that Balian was a dedicated Christian who took his faith very seriously. Nor did Balian desert the defence of the Holy Land following the fall of Jerusalem. Far from returning to France, Balian proceeded to Beirut in Lebanon which he helped fortify against Muslim invasion. He was present with Richard the Lionhearted at the signing of the peace with Saladin, which secured safe passage for Christian pilgrims and recognised crusader control over the 90 mile stretch of coastline from Tyre to Jaffa.

According to *Kingdom of Heaven*, the real hero in the story is the famous Muslim general, Saladin (1138 – 1193). Although an exceptionally gifted military strategist and unusually chivalrous, the film has uncritically accepted, and embellished, the legends about Saladin beyond what the historical record would support. A Muslim Kurd, from Northern Iraq, Saladin was raised in a privileged family, and was very ambitious. At age 14, he joined his uncle's military staff, and at 31 followed him to Egypt where his uncle was Grand Vizier. When his uncle died two months later, Saladin seized power, defeated competing Muslim leaders and started a dynasty which established Egypt as the major Muslim power in the Middle East.

Far from having war forced upon him, Saladin initiated the conflict by declaring a Jihad against the Christians. He swept throughout Palestine capturing more than 50 crusader castles in two years. At the battle of Hattin on 4 July 1187 Saladin's army defeated the Christians on the shores of Lake Tiberius (the Sea of Galilee) – although in the film this battle is depicted as in waterless desert! Far from being the magnanimous victor depicted in modern legends and this film, Saladin was a ruthless general who had thousands of Christian prisoners beheaded in cold blood – including after the battle of Hattin.

In the film, Saladin is portrayed as being most gracious in allowing the defenders of Jerusalem safe passage. In fact after the negotiated surrender of Jerusalem, which the Patriarch of Jerusalem initiated, Saladin demanded that every man, woman and child in Jerusalem pay a ransom for his or her freedom or face the grim prospect of Islamic slavery. In order to save the lives and liberty of the poor people who could not afford the heavy ransom demanded by Saladin, Balian paid out of his own resources the ransom required for those who could not afford it.

Twisted Theology

The theology in *Kingdom of Heaven* is also all wrong. The film depicts some monk standing by the roadside repeating: "*To kill an infidel is not murder it is the path to heaven!*" As any student of the Bible would be able to tell you, neither the concept nor those words appear anywhere in the Christian Bible. However, as any student of the Quran should be able to inform you that is exactly what the Islamic doctrine of Jihad teaches.

At one point early in the film as Muslims bow in prayer towards Mecca, Balian comments: "*You allow them to pray?*" A knight sneers and answers: "*As long as they pay their taxes!*" In fact the crusaders never required any extra taxes of Muslims in order to allow them to pray. That is the Islamic doctrine and practice of *Jizya*. To this day Muslim governments require *Jizya* – tribute taxes – of *dhimmi's* (Jews and Christians under their Islamic rule).

Before the crusaders march out to the disastrous battle of Hattin, the film has one knight declaring: "*The army of Jesus Christ cannot be beaten.*" However, there is no such doctrine in the Bible, or in Christian theology. It is, in fact, Islamic dogma that no Muslim army can never be defeated by an infidel army. This Muhammad asserted on the authority of Allah himself. (Something which the recent defeats, of the Taliban, in Afghanistan, and Saddam Hussein's Muslim military superpower of the Middle East, Iraq, by the Americans has precipitated a serious theological problem for Islamic scholars).

Insults to Intelligence

Quite aside from the factual errors in geography, the attributing of Islamic doctrine to the Christians, and the blatant distortion of history, the *Kingdom of Heaven* is an insult to the intelligence of its viewers in terms of its preposterous script.

Here we are expected to believe that: Balian is grieving his wife's death, yet he does not even attend to her burial; that Balian raised a commoner, trained only as a blacksmith, from France, could within days of arriving in Palestine be teaching the local people how to practice agriculture and dig wells in the desert; and that this blacksmith with no military training could know more about siege weapons and military strategy than all the knights and military professionals concentrated in the Holy Land put together! Just where would a blacksmith have learnt all about siege engines, trebuchets, cavalry tactics and defensive strategy?

The fictional, adulterous relationship depicted between Balian and Princess Sibylla strains all credibility. As does Balian's presumed ethical objections against executing the venomous and bloodthirsty husband of his presumed adulterous interest! Apparently justice and the avoiding of a disastrous war were not as important as his adulterous affections.

Aside from the terrain around Jerusalem being so conveniently flat for the invading armies, the depicted firepower and range capabilities of the catapults and trebuchets are ridiculous. Steel cranes with three-inch titanium cables would have trouble sustaining the weight and strain with which these 12th Century wooden and rope trebuchets were meant to have pulverised the thick walls of Jerusalem! The film makers of *Kingdom of Heaven* try to make up for a lack of script and character development by overdosing on computer generated explosions and fictional firepower capabilities. (Actually maximum range for a 12th Century catapult would have been 150 yards with a 300 pound rock).

And how can any viewer with a grasp of history or military tactics swallow the kind of tactics and strategy dished up in films like *Kingdom of Heaven*? What soldiers throw their shields away just before engaging a massive assault by the enemy?! Apparently, Orlando Bloom wanted his long flowing locks to flow in the breeze, but seriously, what knight would throw his helmet away just before engaging in hand to hand combat?!

Also, as any student of history and anthropology should be able to tell you, the crusaders did not burn the bodies of their dead. That was the practice of the Vikings, the ancient Greeks and the Hindus, but not of the Christians who buried their dead.

The ridiculous speech with its feel good "*why can't we all just get along*" drivel dished up by Orlando Bloom's Balian on the walls of Jerusalem (while Saladin's armies politely delay their attack until he has finished) may sound believable to some 21st Century Humanist, but these

were not the convictions or sentiments of any 12th Century crusader. As for the pathetic egalitarian gesture of knighting everybody – without any training, testing or code of conduct – is so unhistorical, and so out of touch with reality, as to make one wonder what drugs the scriptwriter was on at the time.

Then there's that shipwreck. To expect us to believe that the hero of the film could go down with the ship in high seas, and awake the next morning alive and well, on the shore – with the entire crew and every passenger, and every horse dead, and neatly deposited on the shore – is ludicrous. Especially that the only survivors of the shipwreck were the hero, and his horse! And of course, very conveniently, his father's sword was not the kind of heavy sword that would sink to the bottom of the ocean, but was also neatly deposited next to this sole survivor!

Crusade Against Christianity

The ridiculous and inane comments attributed to the bishop in the film are also not only highly unlikely, but jarringly anachronistic. Producer Ridley Scott, and scriptwriter William Monahan, obviously hate Christianity. But, just in case any viewers lack the discernment to detect the unveiled anti-Christian hostility and prejudice, which permeates the entire movie, Ridley Scott, has gone on record as stating: "*Balian is an agnostic, just like me.*" Of course there was no such thing as agnosticism in the 12th Century, especially not amongst crusaders. The word "*agnostic*" was a 19th Century invention.

Just in case anyone misunderstood the motivations behind his movie, Ridley Scott has been quoted as saying: "*If we could just take God out of the equation, there would be no (expletive) problem!*"

Entertainment or Exploitation?

Considering how few people today read history books, and how most depend entirely on these kind of "*based on a true story – the names and the places are true – only the facts have been changed to protect the guilty*" films, for their understanding of the past, this kind of blind prejudice and obsessive hatred against Christianity on the part of producers and directors should be frightening. As Karl Marx declared: "*The first battlefield is the rewriting of history.*" I'm sure that all the enemies of Christianity are delighted with propaganda pics like *Kingdom of Heaven*.

Further evidence of the blind anti-Christian prejudice of many in Hollywood is seen in some of the reviews of *Kingdom of Heaven*: Frederick Brussat of Spirituality and Health comments: *"We are pleased to see (the Muslims) come across in a more positive light in this well intentioned blockbuster about the crusades...all of the Christians in this story come across as arrogant and unlikable human beings...never darkening the door of a church. Their Muslim counterparts, on the other hand, are seen doing the ritual prayer; in one impressive scene this involves Saladin's entire army."*

Varia Galley's Filmiliar Cineaste is quite positive about the film and describes it as *"A grand success and a moving depiction of the crusades as a bloodbath in the name of piety...Scott...makes the point that religious zealotry...has historically resulted in mass slaughter."*

That is, of course, a commonly held article of faith of Secular Humanists, but the fact is that far more people have died in the name of Atheism and Secular Humanism (over 180 million citizens were murdered by their own Secular Humanist / Atheist / Communist governments just in the 20th Century alone) than by all other organised religions combined.

A Political Agenda

It is also interesting to note the political lessons that some reviewers seem to derive from the film. William Arnold in the Seattle Post Intelligencer comments that the *Kingdom of Heaven* *"is an again compelling argument for the growing contention that the city (Jerusalem) should be internationalised and administered for all faiths by the United Nations"*! Considering that the United Nations could not even administer Angola, Rwanda, Somalia, or Bosnia without widespread massacres taking place under their "protection" it is not very clear why the United Nations should be trusted with anything at all. (To refute this argument see [Hotel Rwanda](#)).

The Verdicts of the Film Critics

To be fair, many reviewers were critical of the film and condemned it: *"Scott's would-be epic...has the feel of a retread...the battle scenes...looked like a PlayStation video game"* (Bob Bloom - Rotten Tomatoes)

"(Scott's) latest epic hero film is without one key ingredient, the hero...miscasting made all the more noticeable when Scott surrounds his delicate star with big, strapping monsters in chain mail...weighing it down further is a gutless script...but lots of pseudo politics alluding to our

modern day semi-religious war between the West and Islam." (Annette Cardwell – filmcritic.com)

"As history, Monahan's script is suspect..." (Bob Bloom)

"Kingdom of Heaven deserves extreme caution for its theological and historical weaknesses..."
(Movieguide)

"For almost five years now, Hollywood studios have been trying to duplicate the success of 'Gladiator' by making the same big budget historical battle epic over ('The Last Samurai') and over ('Troy') and over ('King Arthur') and over ('Alexander'). Each movie has re-imagined history from a modern...perspective and hewed to a shopworn formula in which the hero rallies his men against great odds and for the greater good...the hero also always finds time to romance a beautiful woman from another culture...Kingdom of Heaven is more of the same...the historical accuracy of the combat finale with the events and circumstances that surround it, are dubious at best. The film is even less reliable when it comes to its hero's personal history. The real life Balian...has otherwise been fictionalised almost beyond recognition – especially when it comes to the obligatory Hubba Hubba with the generically pretty wife of the villain. Balian's wallpaper performance which certainly won't hold the attention of anyone who does not have his pinups plastered around her bedroom doesn't do the guy any favours either...the Muslim Sultan Saladin...has been embellished to sit better with 21st Century audiences..." (William Blackwelder – Splicedonline.com)

"Ridley Scott's Kingdom of Heaven has at its centre a...humourlessness, gracelessness and tortured self importance...the movie's horrible editing style...of shake the camera and cut really fast; it's a method of covering up action, rather than highlighting it, and it usually means that there is not much action to begin with...What finally emerges is a ponderously dull, curiously inert epic that joins the ranks of other recent failures like The Last Samurai and Alexander."
(Jeffrey Anderson – Combustible Celluloid)

Crude Stereotyping

"Kingdom of Heaven is a whole lot of nothing about O, you know, that thing that happened in olden times when a bunch of power hungry white men went a bit god-crazy and invaded the Middle East on a moral superiority kick. The gold wasn't bad either." (Walter Chaw – filmfreakcentral.net). This typical, if crude, stereotyping of the crusades is quite enlightening. It

illustrates the pervasive ignorance of history that enables revisionist film makers like Scott to get away with such blatant distortions of reality.

The Facts of History

The fact is that the Crusades of the Middle Ages were a reaction to centuries of Islamic Jihad. In the first century of Islam alone Muslim invaders conquered the whole of the previously Christian North Africa destroying over 3200 churches – in just 100 years. In the first three centuries of Islam, Muslim forces killed Christians, kidnapped their children to raise them as Muslims, or compelled people at the point of the sword to convert to Islam. Up to 50% of all the Christians in the world were wiped out during those first three centuries of Islam. The Saracens (as the Muslim invaders were called) desecrated Christian places of worship and were severely persecuting Christians. Pilgrims were then prevented from visiting those places where our Lord was born, was crucified and raised from the dead. It was only after four centuries of Islamic Jihad that the crusades were launched as a belated reaction to the blatant Islamic Jihad.

Logistics and Economics

As the Christian History Institute has pointed out, the characterising of crusaders as only in it for the plunder and the loot betrays an ignorance of both geography and history. The vast majority of the crusaders were impoverished and financially ruined by the crusades. Crusaders, through great sacrifice and personal expense, left their homes and families to travel 3000 km across treacherous and inhospitable terrain – and the shortest crusade lasted 4 years. Considering that only 10% of the crusaders had horses, and 90% were foot soldiers, the sheer fact of logistics is that the crusaders could not possibly have carried back enough loot to have made up for the loss of earnings and high expenses involved with these long crusades. Many crusaders lost their homes and farms to finance their involvement in the crusades.

There's More to Life than Money

Perhaps self-seeking materialistic agnostics in the 21st Century cannot understand that some people could be motivated by something other than personal financial enrichment, but the fact is that many people make sacrifices for their religious convictions, and in order to help others. In the case of the crusaders, the historical record makes clear that amongst the motivations that led tens of thousands of volunteers to reclaim the Holy Land was a sense of Christian duty to help their fellow Christians in the East whose lands have been invaded and churches desecrated by Muslim armies, and a desire to secure access to the Holy Lands for pilgrims.

There was also a desire to fight for the honour of their Lord Jesus Christ, Whose churches had been destroyed and Whose Deity had been denied by the Muhammadan aggressors. In other words, to the crusaders this was a defensive war to reclaim Christian lands from Muslim invaders.

We may not share their convictions, or agree with their methods, but we ought to evaluate them in the light of the realities of the 11th and 12th Centuries, and not anachronistically project our standards and politics back upon them.

The Missing Jihad

Scriptwriter William Monahan, and Director Ridley Scott, obviously don't understand the motivations behind the crusaders, and apparently they do not understand the Islamic doctrine of Jihad either – which the film makes no reference to. Considering that Jihad was the central threat that had led to the reaction of the crusades, this omission is inexplicable. *Kingdom of Heaven* preoccupies itself with fictionalising crusader atrocities, but it ignores the pattern of the preceding five centuries of genocide and aggression by Islamic armies. For those wanting the politically incorrect rest of the story which *Kingdom of Heaven* does not even hint of, you would want to read ***Slavery, Terrorism & Islam – The Historical Roots & Contemporary Threat.***

Scott's *Kingdom of Heaven* is politically correct, anti-Christian, pro-Muslim propaganda. It makes poor entertainment and is a worthless distortion of reality.

See also related articles:

- [The End of Islam](#)
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