

# Accuracy of the movie: kingdom of heaven



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HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF "KINGDOM OF HEAVEN" Ridley Scott's 2005 epic movie Kingdom of Heaven is set in 12th century Jerusalem, mostly centering round the character of Balian of Ibelin [Orlando Bloom] as the Christian holy city struggles for supremacy against enemy forces led by Muslim leader Saladin. The movie however, does not compare favorably with historical facts.

The character of Balian of Ibelin in the movie is guilty of many historical inaccuracies. First of all, he is shown as originating from France, whereas he was actually from Italy where his father founded the Ibelin dynasty. His father is wrongly named as Godfrey [Liam Neeson] instead of his correct name, Barisan. Secondly, Balian actually held a high position as one of the kingdom's most prominent nobles; the movie however portrays him as a lowly blacksmith. Thirdly, the movie embroils Balian in a romantic alliance with Sibylla [Eva Green], daughter of King Baldwin IV [Edward Norton] whereas history records no such romance; in fact, Sibylla was romantically involved with Baldwin of Ibelin {Balian's elder brother}, while Balian had a romance going with Sibylla's step-mother Maria Comnena, whom he later married and who bore his offspring. Fourthly, the movie shows Balian conferring knighthood on anyone who was able to pick up a sword and defend Jerusalem when the army of Saladin [Ghassan Massoud] besieges it for nearly a month; historical records indicate Balian knighted only a few burgesses; moreover it would be practically impossible to knight every male who lived in Jerusalem as they numbered in tens of thousands. Fifthly, while the role of Balian in negotiating respectable surrender terms with Saladin is prominently highlighted, the movie not only neglects showing the positive roles of Sibylla and Jerusalem Patriarch Heraclius [Jon Finch], it portrays <https://assignbuster.com/accuracy-of-the-movie-kingdom-of-heaven/>

them in a bad light, even depicting Heraclius as a coward in the scene.

Sixthly, the closing scenes of the film show King Richard I of England [Iain Glen] visiting Balian in France; there is no historical truth in this as Balian not only lacked French origin, but he did not return to France with Sibylla and her two daughters {the lady and her daughters instead perished of fever during the siege of Acre}; moreover Balian's relationship with Richard I was antagonistic - Crusades records refer to Balian as " more false than a goblin," and worthy of being " hunted with dogs" (Wikipedia. org).

The second set of historical accuracies is about the Knights Templar. History records them as celibate soldiers who habitually wore special surcoats designating their monastic military order. In the movie, Guy of Lusignan [Martin Csokas] and Raynald of Chatillon [Brendan Gleeson] are depicted wearing Templar surcoats, thereby implying they belonged to the celibate Templar order. History however records the two men as possessing wives and families. In another scene that takes place just before the Battle of Hattin, the three Templars who attack Balian are shown wearing surcoats emblazoned with black, instead of the traditionally red Templar crosses on their costumes. White surcoats with black crosses were actually the traditional garb of Teutonic Knights, a military order that was only founded in 1190 - 3 years after the Battle of Hattin took place (Wikipedia. org).

Other historically inaccurate scenes include a high court debate between Tiberias [Jeremy Irons] and Guy of Lusignan about the pros and cons of war while King Baldwin IV presides as judge. The scene has no historical truth whatsoever; the war being discussed was actually the Battle of Montgisard which took place in 1177, resulting in the forces of a young 16-year old King Baldwin IV routing Saladin's army {Saladin managed to evade capture}. In

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another historically inaccurate scene, Raynald is shown capturing Saladin's sister [Giannina Facio] during a raid on Saladin's caravans. In historic fact, having learnt a lesson from Raynald's offensive on one caravan, Saladin took pains to ensure the next caravan {with whom his sister was journeying}, was well protected, with the result that it did not come under attack and the lady did not suffer any harm. Lastly, the movie neglects to cover a very important event – the Battle of Hattin. Not only are there no scenes of the battle, but there is no mention of the main reason why Saladin's forces emerged victorious, namely, the infighting between Guy of Lusignan and Raynald of Chatillon (Wikipedia. org).

In conclusion it must be admitted that while not in the same class as Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*, the movie does provide viewers with 145 minutes of highly charged, visceral cinema. After Cecile de Mille's 1935 epic *The Crusades*, there have been very few good films about the Crusades. Scott's *Kingdom of Heaven* goes a long way towards filling that gap.

References:

“ Kingdom of Heaven.” Wikipedia. org. 2007. 5 Dec. 2007.

Scott, Ridley. “ Kingdom of Heaven.” Fox Pictures. 2005.