



Good day Worthy Knights, in this part 52, the Twelve Grand Points of the Cross : 11th.

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11. The humble garb assumed by Heraclius, in place of his robes of royalty, when he carried the Cross into the Church on Mount Calvary.

But after Heraclius dismounted and removed his crown, the Cross became miraculously light, and the barred city gate opened of its own accord. Thus Emperor Heraclius marched triumphantly into Jerusalem and restored the True Cross to the rebuilt Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Dispersal of relics of the True Cross:

Now what was the fate of the cross in later years? After the Muslims conquered Jerusalem, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre remained a Christian church. The early Muslim rulers protected the city's Christian sites, prohibiting their destruction and their use as living quarters.

The Old English poem 'Dream of the Rood' from about 665, mentions the finding of the cross and the beginning of the tradition of the veneration of its relics. This caused the cross to be divided in smaller and smaller pieces. A portion of the cross was taken to Rome in about 687 by Pope Sergius I, who was of Byzantine origin.

The Anglo-Saxon King Alfred is to have received a fragment of the cross from Pope Marinus, about 883. One of the largest fragments of the True Cross is at Santo Toribio de Liébana in Spain.

In 966 the doors and roof of the church of the Holy Sepulchre were burnt during a riot. Around 1009, Christians in Jerusalem hid part of the cross and it remained hidden until the city was taken in 1099 by the European knights of the First Crusade.

The first Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem had the Greek Orthodox priests who were in possession of the Cross tortured in order to reveal its position. The relic that was discovered was a small fragment of wood embedded in a golden cross, and it became the most sacred relic of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. It was housed in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre under the protection of the Latin Patriarch, who marched with it ahead of the army before every battle.

The Knights Templar themselves were documented as having a piece of the True Cross which they carried into battle with them and it was carried with them when they confronted the Saracens at the fateful Battle of the Horns of Hattin in 1187. It was there that the Templars suffered their greatest defeat and the relic of the True Cross was captured by Saladin.

Some Christian rulers, like Richard the Lion Heart, Byzantine emperor Isaac II Angelos and Tamar, Queen of Georgia, sought to ransom it from Saladin. Legend has it that Saladin agreed to return the cross as part of the treaty with Richard following the surrender of the City of Acre to the Knights Templar in 1191.

But the provisions of the treaty were not met, the Saracen prisoners slaughtered and the largest part of the cross subsequently disappeared from historical records.

Most of the very small relics of the True Cross in Europe came from Constantinople. The city was captured and sacked by the Fourth Crusade in 1204. The crusaders found inestimable wealth, and in a chapel were found two pieces of the True Cross, as thick as a man's leg and a fathom in length, and the reliquary with the part of the cross of the Lord, which Helena had transferred from Jerusalem which was decorated with gold and precious jewels.

It was carved up by the present bishops and was divided with other very precious relics among the knights; later, after their return to the homeland, it was donated to churches and monasteries.

By the end of the Middle Ages so many churches claimed to possess a piece of the True Cross, that John Calvin is famously said to have remarked that there was enough wood in them to fill a ship. However, a catalogue drawn up in 1870 of all known relics of the True Cross shows that, in spite of what various authors have claimed, the fragments of the Cross when brought together would not reach one-third that of a cross.

The rest is lost, destroyed, or otherwise unaccounted for. The Cross worn by the knights of our order and the Cross shown on the banner of Constantine however, is not a passion cross, but a Latin cross, with the four arms spreading equilaterally to the four cardinal points and thus encompassing the whole world, in remembrance of the sign Constantine saw in the heavens with the words *In Hoc Signo Vinces*.

These words and a passion cross feature on the Star Jewel of another knightly order for a knight, This star has as its central feature a simple Calvary Cross and surrounding it an inscription which reads, 'In hoc signo vinces' meaning, 'In this sign thou shalt conquer.' The central feature in a Conclave of our order of course is the cross itself, representing the Cross of Calvary.

It is placed on top of the altar of seven steps in the east and thus set in a landscape indicative of Golgotha where Our Lord was crucified. The Cross is empty, suggestive of the Risen Christ and emphasizing his victory over death in rising again on the third day, showing that death was defeated and no longer to be feared.

