

EDITORS' NOTE

Louis 'Le Lion' – invader of England

Louis VIII (5 September 1187 – 8 November 1226), posthumously nicknamed “The Lion” (French: *Le Lion*) was King of France from 1223 to 1226. As prince, he invaded England on 21 May 1216 at the request of rebellious barons opposed to King John.¹ Soon after landing at the Isle of Thanet, Louis was proclaimed "King of England" at the old St Paul's Cathedral in London on 2 June that year, but he was never crowned.

His forces seized half the English kingdom, including Winchester, but he was eventually defeated by the English forces led by William Marshal. After King John died at Newark in 1216, many barons switched away from the French invaders to support his successor, the nine-year-old, Winchester-born Henry III. Their anger had been against John rather than support for Louis.² In the Treaty of Lambeth, Louis was paid 10,000 marks and pledged never to invade England again.³

Later, Louis led forces during the Albigensian Crusade in support of Simon de Montfort the Elder, from 1219 to 1223. He was crowned as Louis VIII in 1223 and continued this campaign from January 1226 to September 1226. Louis' campaigns in 1224 and 1226 against the Angevin Empire gained him Poitou, Saintonge, Périgord and Angoumois as well as cities in Languedoc. These wins left the Angevin Kings of England, then represented by young Henry III, with Gascony as their only remaining continental possession.⁴

Louis died in November 1226 from dysentery and was succeeded by his son, the saintly Louis IX (1214-70) who was canonized by Pope Benedict VIII in 1297.⁵ Louis IX's great building project was Sainte-Chapelle in Paris which was built to house what was believed to be a relic of Christ's Crown of Thorns.

¹ Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075-1225*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000, p. 16.

² Bartlett, *Ibid.*, p. 66.

³ Catherine Hanley, *Louis the French Prince Who Invaded England*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2016, p. 176.

⁴ Bartlett, *England Under the Normans*, p. 28.

⁵ David Farmer, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 5th edition, revised. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 274-75