



IDAHO SUPPLEMENT

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Freemasonry & the Founding of the United States

Contending with Hugh de Payens, the first Grand Master, Jacques DeMolay probably holds the position as the most famous Grand Master of the Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon.

Not much is known about DeMolay's early life. Since it was said that he joined the Templars at the age of 21 in 1265 and died at the age of 70, historians believe he was born to a minor noble family around 1244 in Molay, in the French region of Haute-Saône, in the county of Burgundy. At the time, this territory was ruled by Otto III as part of the Holy Roman Empire, and in modern times in the area of Franche-Comté, northeastern France.

As I said before, DeMolay joined the Templars in 1265. He was received into the Order in a chapel at the Beaune House which attended by Amaury de la Roche, Templar Master of the Province of France. Little is remembered of his activities for the next 20 years, but it is said he spent most of his time in the East where legend says he, as Marshal of the Order, was one of the survivors of the siege of Acre, escaping with the then Grand Master, Thibaud Gaudin.

At the death of Gaudin in 1292, De Molay was elected as Grand Master. By this time the Templars were located on the island of Cyprus due to the loss of the Holy Land to the Mamluks. Immediately he departed on a European trip to seek support for another Crusade to retake the Holy Land. This would prove difficult as morale was down

and, politically, the Templars were seen as the "men who lost the Holy Land" so there was little faith in their ability to conquer Mamluks. He was able to secure supplies to assist in the strengthening of the Cyprus island, but couldn't muster any commitment for a new Crusade.

They tried several times to take the coastal city of Tortosa (Syria), but they were relying on the assistants of the Mongols. Their faith in Mongol assistance was misplaced, as they had their own internal/tribal issues, and each time they attempted to retake Tortosa they were pushed back to the staging island of Ruad. They would lose the island of Ruad in September of 1302. This eliminated the Christians's last foothold in close proximity to the mainland.

Following this loss, De Molay kept trying to raise enough support to raise a large enough army to invade and reconquer the Holy Land, but power struggles erupted in Europe; Phillip and the Papacy as well as the feud between King Henry II and his brother Amalric. There was also a push for the knightly orders to merge, which we see both De Molay and the Hospitaller leadership reject.

In the next issue I will be discussing the accusation, charges, and tortures laid against the Templar order and the resulting death of Jacques DeMolay.

