

King Louis VIII Capet of France



Born: 5 Sept 1187 Paris, FRA
Married: 23 May 1200 Blanche of Castile
Died: 8 Nov 1226 Auvergne, FRA
Parents: King Philip II & Isabelle of Hainaut

Louis VIII the Lion (French: Louis VIII le Lion) (September 5, 1187 – November 8, 1226) reigned as King of France from 1223 to 1226. He was a member of the House of Capet. Louis VIII was born in Paris, France, the son of Philip II of France and Isabelle of Hainaut.

At the age of 12, Louis was married to Blanche of Castile on 23 May 1200, following prolonged negotiations between Philip Augustus and Blanche's uncle John of England.

In 1216 the English barons rebelled in the First Barons' War against the unpopular King John of England (1199–1216) and offered the throne to Prince Louis. Louis invaded and was proclaimed King in London in May 1216, although he was not crowned. There was little resistance when the prince entered London. At St Paul's Cathedral, Louis was accepted as ruler with great pomp and celebration in the presence of all of London. Many nobles, including Alexander II of Scotland (1214–49), gathered to give homage to him.

On June 14 he captured Winchester and soon conquered over half of the English kingdom. After a year and a half of war, most of the rebellious barons had defected and so Louis had to give up his claim to be the King of England by signing the Treaty of Lambeth in 1217. The effect of the treaty was that Louis agreed he had never been the legitimate king of England.

Louis VIII succeeded his father on July 14, 1223; his coronation took place on August 6 of the same year in the cathedral at Reims. As King, he continued to seek revenge on the Angevins and seized Poitou and Saintonge from them in 1224. There followed the seizure of Avignon and Languedoc.

On 1 November 1223, he issued an ordinance that prohibited his officials from recording debts owed to Jews, thus reversing the policies set by his father Philip II of France (1180–1223). Usury (lending money with interest) was illegal for Christians to practice, according to Church law it was seen as a vice in which people profited from others' misfortune (like gambling), and was punishable by excommunication, a severe punishment. However since Jews were not Christian, they could not be excommunicated, and thus fell in to a legal gray area which secular rulers would sometimes

exploit by allowing (or requesting) Jews to provide usury services, often for personal gain to the secular ruler, and to the discontent of the Church. Louis VIII's prohibition was one attempt at resolving this legal problem which was a constant source of friction in Church and State courts.

Twenty six barons accepted, but Theobald IV (1201–53), the powerful Count of Champagne, did not, since he had an agreement with the Jews that guaranteed him extra income through taxation. Theobald IV would become a major opposition force to Capetian dominance, and his hostility was manifest during the reign of Louis VIII. For example, during the siege of Avignon, he performed only the minimum service of 40 days, and left home amid charges of treachery.

In 1225, the council of Bourges excommunicated the count of Toulouse, Raymond VII, and declared a crusade against the southern barons. Louis happily renewed the conflict in order to enforce his royal rights. Roger Bernard the Great, count of Foix, tried to keep the peace, but the king rejected his embassy and the counts of Foix and Toulouse took up arms against him. The king was largely successful, but he did not complete the work before his death.

While returning to Paris, King Louis VIII became ill with dysentery, and died on November 8, 1226 in the chateau at Montpensier, Auvergne.

The Saint Denis Basilica houses the tomb of Louis VIII. His son, Louis IX (1226–70), succeeded him on the throne.

Marriage

On May 23, 1200, at the age of twelve, Louis married Blanche of Castile (March 4, 1188 – November 26, 1252).

Issue

1. Philippe (September 9, 1209 – 1218)
2. Louis IX (April 25, 1214 – August 25, 1270)
3. Robert (September 25, 1216 – February 9, 1250)
4. Jean (July 21, 1219 – 1232)
5. Alphonse of Toulouse (November 11, 1220 – August 21, 1271)
6. Philippe Dagobert (February 20, 1222 – 1232)
7. Isabel (June 1225 – February 23, 1269)
8. Etienne (born and died 1226)
9. Charles I of Sicily (March 1227 – January 7, 1285)

Preceded by

Philip II King of France
1223–26 Succeeded by
Louis IX



Wedding of King Louis VIII and Blanche of Castile. Louis was 12 years old.