

THE MYSTERY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND HIS RETURN AS ELIJAH AT THE END OF TIME

Religious scientists and historians call John the Baptist the “most mysterious figure of the New Testament”. His whole life and work are veiled in mystery, indeed. Beginning with the miracle of his birth and ending with his seizure and decapitation, the extraordinary and the mysterious seem to follow one another.

In 8-6 BC a boy is born in Jerusalem. The father, a prophet and priest, stems from the line of Zadok which had held the privilege of office of high priest since the time of David. The mother’s line traces back to Aaron. She is Mary’s - the mother of Christ’s - cousin. Mother and child hide in the stone desert of Judea. The father is killed on account of his son by Herod. Why?

Out of the blue this John seems to appear as a powerful preacher and reformer some 30 years later. Thousands upon thousands take hikes of several days upon themselves to hear him preach. The Roman historiographer Josephus Flavius calls him a popular hero “by whose words everyone is guided”. What did he preach?

At first the Jews take him to be the return of Elijah, later on to be the messiah. He always answers in the negative, but, beyond this, hardly informs about himself. Eventually he leaves Judea for good, and leaves for the east bank of the Border-River Jordan to Perea, which today is part of the state of Jordan. Why?

There he commences with his uncompromising sermons and with the baptism “into the Jordan”. Especially with the rite of baptism John does invalidate the rules of the Jewish Church, yes, even the Mosaic Laws and the worship by sacrifice in the Temple. Why? As a consequence of his actions and instructions the country is standing before its financial and religious ruin all of a sudden. Why? The neutral historiographer Josephus Flavius reports that all over the country a veritable “fever-of-John” breaks out. At the height of his renown and veneration John eventually baptizes Jesus before a huge public and hands the closest circle of his disciples over to him. What were his reasons for this?

What, finally, is the true cause for John’s seizure and decapitation by Herod Antipas? What was Salome’s part in this?

Approximately six months after the beheading of the Baptist, Jesus suffers death by crucifixion. John being born six months before Jesus, as authenticated, both reached the same age. Maybe even to the day. Is there a deeper significance behind this?

Furthermore, there are manifold parallels between the two, like the same way, the same aim, the same fate, including the unjust death-sentence. To understand them separately from one another is a difficult task, practicable only for the one naively devout. Why was the large circle of disciples of John interdicted the right of speech by Herod Antipas, and eventually even forced into banishment?

Was Jesus a member of the Baptist's circle of Nazirs? And lastly, why was Jesus only persecuted by the Jewish priesthood and the authorities of the state after the death of the Baptist?

The peculiar and extraordinary of John the Baptist even reaches beyond his biblical death, for there exists an abundance of presumptions, circumstantial proofs, and riddles concerning the whereabouts of his remains. The head is an exception to this. It is the most significant sanctum of one of the most majestic buildings of Islamic architecture, the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. It arrived there at the end of an Odyssey in 379 AD, for the head had been stolen and re-found thrice. As a sign of gratitude for its recovery, Theodosius I built a Church of John as shrine for the relic. More than 300 years later this church was turned into a mosque.

The history relating the "relic of the right arm" is even more hazardous. At the crowning ceremony of the Byzantine Emperor this relic was part of the imperial investiture. It later came into the possession of the Turks, however. In 1480 the "Knights of the Order of St. John at Rhodos and Malta" (from these stem the present "Sovereign Order of Malta" and "Johanniter Orders") successfully defended the Isle of Rhodos against the Islamic Turks and forced the Sultan to hand over the arm relic. In 1799 Malta fell, however. In a secret mission the Knights brought their sanctum to St. Petersburg to the Winter Palace. The Czar Family seemed to be the most securest protectorate for the arm relic. After the outbreak of the October Revolution, an Orthodox priest was ordered by the Czar to secretly deliver the relic to the Danish Royal Family to, in this way, protect it from destruction by the Bolsheviks. In 1931, King George II of Greece eventually mentions in an official statement concerning the abode of the arm relic that it "is kept in the chapel of the King of Yugoslavia in utmost precautionary circumstances". Ever since the disorders of WW II and of the Yugoslavian government by Tito the whereabouts of this arm relic is officially unknown. Insiders presume the hiding place to be on an island off the Dalmatian shore, stored in the ground of a church consecrated to another John, the writer of the Apocalypse. This John and presumed later Apostle of Jesus, furthermore is said to have been a disciple of John the Baptist.

But also other relics of the Baptist have an adventurous history. Splinters of bones and tooth relics can be found in many churches in Europe. The cloth of decapitation was part of the personal treasure of Charles the Great. The legendary camel coat and the goblet of the Baptist are kept in the Church San Giovanni Laterano in Rome. All these relics came to Europe through the crusades.

In the 3rd and 4th ct AD a veritable rush on relics of the Baptist broke out among Christians, since manifold miracles were connected with them. Eventually the Roman Emperor Julian ordered the remains to be burnt. Whatever still exists today was rescued from destruction by monks in adventurous modes.

Only few Christians know that the bowl on which the head of the Baptist was handed over to Herodias and Salome is part of the Holy Grail, together with the chalice of blood of Jesus Christ.

But why is there so much ado about the "relic of the right arm"? While the mystic significance of the Holy Grail is recorded in manifold writings and epics, there are

hardly any documents on the importance of the arm relic. Only in the course of my research, especially in Orthodox churches of the southeast and east of Europe did I several times encounter mysterious traditions, respectively legends: "The right arm of John the Baptist is the terrestrial symbol of God's admonishing hand and of the double-edged sword in one, that will separate light from darkness in the hour x. Before this, Satan will still be given the power to hide this terrestrial exhorting sign of God from men. When the arm will be rediscovered, Satan's might over earth and man is broken, however. The sword of God will then be placed in this arm to conclusively make even the way for Christ."

This right arm, of course, has deep mystical, yes, biblical significance. Especially so in the Orthodox Church. All attributes like chalice (symbol for the sacrifice of Christ), the staff with the cross (crosier of the herald of God, reference to Christ's death on the cross), the scroll (sign of the prophet), the book (closed, yet, opened on the day of judgement), as well as the banner with the bible verse ("ecce agnus dei"), etc., are mostly described and depicted in connection with his right arm.

In Byzantine and Orthodox iconography the veneration of Ioannis Prodromos (John the Precursor) is predominant. These icons depict John the Baptist almost exclusively with wings, holding the pastoral stick with the cross, and quite frequently also with the two-edged sword. And, always, his cut-off head on the bowl is portrayed. The wings thereby refer to the prediction of Malachi: "I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me ... the angel of my covenant in whom you delight ..." (Malachi 3:1). At the same time they are an allusion to the final judgement: "Lo, I will send you the Prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes" (Malachi 4:5).

The constant reference to the identity with Elijah the, on the one hand, first prophet of God and, on the other hand, last messenger before the great judgement most certainly is part of the mystery continuously surrounding John the Baptist. Wherefrom does the assumption stem that John the Baptist is verily identical with Elijah?

It begins with his birth. An angel heralds it to the parents. It rather seems like a derision, since the mother chosen (Elizabeth) is barren and, additionally, by that time beyond the age in which conception is possible. The father (Zechariah) is an old man, angry at the angel as well as at God for mocking him. Yet, the angel remains unperturbed and reveals that this child will be a "prophet of the Most High". Additionally the spirit of Elijah shall be in him. This, at least, is the biblical report in Luke 1:68-79. This evangelical message could of course have been interpreted christologically by the Early Church. Yet, there are certified pre-Christian sources, aside from the New Testament, in which the extraordinary birth and significance of John the Baptist are described in detail, like, for example, in "The Mandaeen Book of John". This text originated decades before the gospels, and has been preserved undamaged for almost two-thousand years.

The biblically clearest reference to the identity of John and Elijah is given to us by Jesus himself. According to the Evangelist Matthew (Mt 11:13-15), Jesus says about John: "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John came; and if you are

willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. Let anyone with ears listen!" This statement is of great importance. For one, there is already the reference that all the prophets and the law prophesied towards him. And then the absolute assertion that John is the Elijah who is to come. This passage is very revealing, for, in the same context, Jesus speaks of John in the past tense: "For John came neither eating and drinking ..." (Mt 11:18). Did Jesus speak about the beheaded John here, and did he prophesy his return as "the Elijah who will come"? Even if Jesus should have spoken about the imprisoned, that is, the still living John, the question remains: what was it that made Jesus call John the Elijah-to-come, while the latter, always answered the question, if he were Elijah with "I am not" (John 1:21).

Is this an error, a contradiction of the evangelists or is there a deeper meaning which we should understand? Can it be that John the Baptist has to fulfil two missions? Then the first mission would have been fulfilled by him approximately 2000 years ago: "See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me", like the Prophet Malachi had heralded. The second mission, however, "Lo, I will send you the Prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes", then is still ahead of us. Also the question remains unanswered, if the prediction of Isaiah "one will come who will make even all ways", refers to the time 2000 years ago or to the time ahead of us.

Studying biblical and non-biblical texts and documents in the course of my research of life and work of John the Baptist, the return of John the Baptist seemed logical to me. The seeming contradictions of the gospels easily dissolve through the comparison of a historically retraceable Jochanan ben Zechariah (John the Baptist) with the texts of the New Testament. The Roman historiographer Josephus Flavius, as a witness of this time, lastly reveals more about the precursor of Christ than the Bible itself. On the other hand we know that all the texts about the Baptist in the New Testament were revised by early-Christian writers. The allocation of the rank of John the Baptist as sole precursor of Jesus was the theological problem of the early fathers of the Church. With this the unity of both heralds of God was not done justice to.

Altogether the Christian Church made mistakes beyond repair by reducing John the Baptist to the mere forerunning of Jesus 2000 years ago. What, then, does the Vatican do with some of the probably most significant combatants of its Church, like with the canonized Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) or Pope John XXIII (1881-1963)?

The preciseness and clarity with which a return of the Baptist at the end of times is predicted make one shudder.

Hildegard describes customs and conditions of the final time in detail in her main oeuvre. The rising of the antichrist with all his miraculous deeds and works for the world, and, at the same time the great decline of faith and the turn to other religions, up to a uniform reorganization of the world, promising peace and wealth. Baptism and cross, the adoration of Christ are interdicted with the threat of punishment, etc.. Eventually Elijah appears, at first urged and persecuted, finally, however, as the powerful messenger of God who opposes the antichrist. This event

will be accompanied by signs and catastrophes. At another place Hildegard describes a vision, in which she sees the returning John as the appearance of an enormously big star, spreading wonderful splendour and as swift as lightning turning towards the flame of Christ. " In faithful deed he blazes up in his miracles and shows the true word ..."

It is interesting that only few visionaries and preachers were treated with such esteem and veneration by the Church as she was. Especially recently she has been re-discovered – unfortunately, however, predominantly through her gardening- and cookbooks, which make use of her name, rather than through her principal work on the return of Elijah.

The prophesy of Pope John XXIII is more concise, however:

"Michael and John will step down onto the earth ..."

"Half-moon, star and cross will collide.

There will be someone holding up the black cross.

From the valley of the prince the blind horsemen will come.

After them the ravens of hunger, of misery, of plague.

Whereto can you still flee, after you have destroyed the Church and killed the last Father?"

Do expect the sign of John.

"The lamb is prepared."

"Open your hearts to the Lily.

The voice announced by the trumpets will be mighty.

Light from the west, the last light before the eternal unknown light."

"The screams are swelling, the barriers of discord.

The beast is already emerging from the waters.

Famine stops the armies. Men are expecting death.

God has unchained the war of nature, to prevent the war of men ...

The daughter of Cain has descended in the North to preach. Seven years of luxury in the new Babylon. In the seventh year the seventh veil of Salome will fall, but there is no Emperor, there is nobody who could lift up the sword and cut off the head of John.

The time is nigh."

We still lack understanding of some of the figures of speech. Others seem easy to understand, however.

"Half-moon, star, and cross" refer to the Islamic, Jewish, and the Christian peoples. At the latest through September 11, 2001 and the world-wide acts of terrorism, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, we know about this meaning. The "black cross" symbolizes the forces of evil, the power and weapon of the antichrist. Headed for world-dominion, yet, pretending to act in the name of Christ. "From the valley of the prince" is a hint at Satan, the prince of this world. His forces unleash through the

power and wealth of his followers and combatants, these "blind horsemen", pretending to act by command of God, in truth, however, serving his counter-part. Famine, misery, and epidemics follow. The churches no longer have any significance, the last pope apparently will be murdered. Only then, as relief, the sign of John will appear, followed by his powerful word. He is called the last light, before the end of the previous world, and a new unknown light (Christ). Yet, only then the great and relentless settlement between the followers of the True Cross of Christ and those of the black cross will ensue. This will be followed by wars and natural catastrophes of unknown measure. The "new Babylon" can be a reference to cities, countries, or even cultures. John the Baptist will be persecuted. They will want to kill him, symbolized by the fall of the "seventh veil of Salome", but they will not succeed. "The Lamb is prepared" and "the time is nigh" are historically certified quotations of the Baptist, heralding the coming of Christ. Especially in this prophesy it has an intended significance and symbolizes hope and fulfilment.

There still exist a series of prophesies on the return of John the Baptist at the end of time. Especially renowned are the prophesies of Bertha Dudde (1891-1965) as well as those of the visionary and mystic Jakob Lorber (1800-1864). Also the already mentioned oral traditions and statements by orthodox monks on the return of the Baptists, and the omens thereof, are of special importance. A detailed reproduction of these would be outside the scope of this essay.

Summed up it does become clear, however:

The signs are

- "Brother-blood soaking the holy graves of the Bogomiles" (= Gnostics of the Early Middle Ages, persecuted by the Vatican. Their graves are memorials in Bosnia.) = Civil war among the Balkan states, especially Bosnia
- "The Bear will famish in the snow, but then will harass to death those who had intended to divide up his fur among themselves" = Decline of Russia and her unexpected revival
- "The half-moon will shine as a whole one over the earth" = The combat of Islam?
- "The last Babylon neither has wall surrounding it nor a gate that can be locked. Yet, no Babylon was inhabited by fewer generations than this one before it dies." = Ruin of a western, relatively young world metropolis?

And the beginning of the end

- "The beheaded one will come with his head erect. Yet, before this will happen his right arm will show itself with the sword. It will take a long time before people will recognize that this is not a sword, but the sign of the crucified one with which darkness will be banned." = The return of John the Baptist as the renewed precursor of Christ and forerunner of the Last Judgement.

But I also have recent predictions on this theme before me. The texts are concrete and full of verbal power. The source is reliable, and has to be taken serious. A partial publication already took place.

Analysing these prophecies on the return of John, the following predominant criteria become visible:

- The return is connected with the end of the previous world, which does not refer to a destruction of the planet, but describes a painful process of purification.
- The majority of the people and the predominant powers oppose John, and by doing so Christ himself, because they wish to preserve the existing values and principles of the material world.
- Wars and natural catastrophes will unsettle world and man on a large scale. The living will envy the dead. There will be a state as prophesied by Christ in the Gospel of Luke in chapter 21.
- The majority of men will mistake the antichrist for God, because he pleads for the preservation of the previous world and mankind. In his promise of successful fight against the plagues of man, like wars, religious differences, hunger and sickness, they will mistake him to be the messiah. Additionally he has the power to work miracles, which they will consider proof of his "divinity".
- In his renewed mission John the Baptist will again suffer martyrdom through persecution and threat of murder. His words and messages will be rejected. With his feigned love for man and world, Satan will be mistaken for God. The prophesied Christ, together with the one proclaiming him, will be declared to be foe of earth and mankind.
- Only as a result of the powerful and unexpected intervention of God will light and darkness be separated. Those having understood that the realm of Christ is not of this world, understand the redeeming deed. Those adoring the world and the transient body will – biblically spoken – be effaced.

To solve the whole mystery of John the Baptist, of his life, and of his return, a review of the biblical and historical "Jochanan ben Zechariah" is necessary.

The already mentioned Mandaean are known to us from pre-Christian sources. They were part of a considerable Jewish movement identifying John with the expected messiah. This up to now existing, honourable sect emerged from the general fever-of-John of that historical movement, and was forcefully expelled by Herod Antipas in 32 AD. Today they exist in Iraq and Iran. Through them the access to the oldest pre-Christian written notes is possible for us, and "The Book of John of the Mandaean" is preserved. By the way, the position of the Mandaean to consider John the Baptist the true messiah, was and is the same today. In that book the wonderful birth of the Baptist, the star shining over his birth, the visit of the three magi, the persecution, and the intended murder of the boy, and the command of an angel to flee from Herod are mentioned.

Therefore religious scientist presume that the birth-story of John was at least partially transferred on Jesus by the Evangelists Matthew and Luke. As a result of intensive personal research I found out, however, that the major part is true for both birth stories.

The mother Elizabeth fled with her new-born boy to the caves of the Judean Desert, to thus protect John from persecution. The father was questioned by soldiers of Herod on the whereabouts of his son, but did not answer. Consequently Herod ordered the murder of Zechariah as well as his expropriation (stately vineyards near Jerusalem).

Shortly afterwards Elizabeth and John were directed to Egypt, while Mary, with Jesus, was guided on the direct route to Egypt, to the Therapists, an Essene brotherhood.

In truth the flight of both is more than a legend and has a decisive reason: Herod the Great neither was Jew nor of Jewish faith, and held the throne merely by the grace of the Romans. Also the spiritual head of the Jews, the High Priest, held this office unlawfully. For, according to Jewish conviction the messiah and true king of Israel had to stem from the House of David, and, parallel to this, the high priest had to stem from the Family of Zadok.

With John the descent from Zadok was undoubted. Yet, it is also historically proved that Jesus' grandfather from the line of his father was called Eli "the Davidian". Eli's descent from Nathan, a son of King David, was also undisputed.

At the birth of both, additionally, an astronomic sign appeared on heaven, the Star of Bethlehem. Considering the voluminous scientific literature on this theme, a serious interpretation by present-day science crystallizes: according to current opinion, "the Star of the Magi" was the threefold meeting of the Planets Jupiter and Saturn in the Constellation of Pisces in the year 7 BC (is this Constellation of Pisces the origin for the fish-symbol of the early Christians?). This recognition coincides exactly with the historic date of birth of John and Jesus in 8-6 BC.

From these few facts it becomes clear, why neither Herod nor the High Priest were neutral towards the two boys. For experience of the birth of both, of the external signs in connection with the attitude of expectation of the Jewish people thus openly interwoven, could not be pushed aside as coincidence any longer.

Therefore the three magi were also led to Herod and to the High Priest. In a sly manner, which to explain would be an extra story, the magi deceived the two by one to two years concerning the birth, in order to organize the flight undisturbed. But in the second year the astronomers of the court made Herod conscious of this deceptive manoeuvre. This is the true background, why Herod had only later boys up to the age of two from the families of Zadok and David searched for, but did not persecute children from other families. The biblically mentioned killing of children therefore is exaggerated and historically not proved. Herod's rigorous way of action to upkeep his own power was so extreme, however, that he even had some of his

own children killed to secure his own throne.

This detailed description of birth, descent, and persecution is essential to understand the later veneration of John and Jesus by the Jewish people, and is substantial to understand the true reason for the rejection and murder of both through priesthood and government power. At the time of John and Jesus many self-appointed Elijahs and Messiahs appeared publicly, but they neither found respect nor were they exposed to persecution. Their appearance was not in accordance with the scriptures, their descent insignificant, and big words alone did not persuade.

There exist no historical sources on childhood and youth, neither for John nor for Jesus. Circumstantial proofs point to an extended sojourn of the adolescent John with the Essenes, yet, at closer scrutiny cannot be upheld. Other evidence, however, points to an extended stay of the young John in parts of India, Persia, and Tibet. Despite intensive research I could not find a decisive proof thereof. The same applies to Jesus' childhood and youth. Also the childhood-stories of both in the Apocrypha rather serve effulgence than the finding of truth. A sojourn of many years of John in the Judean desert is certified. Contemporaries called him the "Hermit of Engedi", which points to his secluded existence in the area of the Dead Sea. His first sermons took place in Jerusalem. They already had an admonishing character. He accused priesthood and governmental powers of double-moral. His reproaches culminated in the accusation that they impoverished the people financially and spiritually. He condemned the victim-cult in the Temple of Jerusalem and called the priests "brood of vipers", because they imposed unacceptable propitiatory sacrifices in the name of God on the people. The adherence to the laws not only was tedious, but also expensive. The number of impure ones and sinners naturally was very large. So, for example, women were already considered impure during their menses, and the days thereafter. Even family members who merely touched a woman during her menses or who sat down on the same chair, were impure. Clearance by a temple priest not only required the purchase of a victim (e.g. a dove), but also the respective payment to a priest. On this background it becomes understandable that merchants of victims of all kinds had their business right at the Temple. For this they again had to pay booth fees and turnover provisions. So the Temple rather resembled a market-hall, a money- or stock exchange than a religious centre.

This subjection of body, spirit, and soul was loudly and angrily pilloried by John. Especially women who, in Jewish understanding, were merely second-ranking in God's plan, and additionally regularly impure, experienced a visible liberation and revaluation by the sermons of this "Hermit of Engedi".

It is proved that the Baptist already drew large crowds and experienced veneration at that time. He withdrew from the masses, however, and vehemently refused any veneration. The regular disappearance after every speech had a reason: he was searched after for violation of the law and blasphemy. Together with his closest circle of disciples, among whom were the later apostles Peter, Andrew, and Thomas, he looked for a place at which the Jewish people could still reach him, yet, that was beyond the reach of the Judean government. This site was "yonder Jordan", opposite Jericho, and was part of the State of Perea under Herod Antipas. At that

place an old and very busy trade route crossed the Jordan River. Additionally this site had a two-fold, biblical significance: here the Jewish people had entered the promised land after the exodus from Egypt, and here Elijah had ascended to heaven.

In addition to his sermons John introduced a religious novelty: the baptism. There were no biblical roots for this at all, and, by the way, also no connection with the Essene emersions. This baptism of John was, so to speak, the breach of all rules. With a one-time immersion into the River of Jordan, he forgave men the sins for which they had had to sacrifice in the Temple before. He vindicated them from "being impure" for ever.

From all sides and parts of the country people streamed to the baptism site, now, "since everyone felt elated through the baptism and speech of John", as the historiographer Josephus Flavius reports. But he also writes that the re-newer and preacher John aroused such strong popular movement and veneration, that an uproar against the governmental authority and a collapse of the system was feared. This seems logical, for who of the Jews would still go to the Temple to over and again make propitiatory sacrifices for his "becoming pure"? Who would still listen to the priests and magistrates, when, in the eyes of the people, Elijah or even the Messiah was present?

This Jochanan ben Zechariah, whose large number of disciples were called the Nazirs (= preservers), now, all of a sudden, became the decisive figure for later Christianity, but also for Islam, where he is considered the forerunner of Muhammad. At the height of his veneration, he took a surprising action, however: before a great crowd he baptized someone until then publicly unknown: Jesus, whose designation "the Nazir" points to membership of John's closest circle (later, by mistake, Nazir was transformed into "from Nazareth"). He informs the dazzled crowd that this Jesus is the prophesied Messiah the way of whom he is preparing. At the same time he authorized Jesus, as the only one, to baptize.

Only two to three months after the baptism of Jesus, the seizure of the Baptist occurs. This was preceded by several attempts to lay hold of the popular idol of the Jews. The reason for the imprisonment and later decapitation is described differently by bible and historiography. The Evangelist Luke imputes an act of revenge to Herodias, since the Baptist pilloried her unlawful marriage with Antipas. Josephus Flavius, however, explains this decisive event with the fear that John could have caused a revolution with one word, which would have overthrown priesthood and governmental power in one. Research rather is in favour of the historian than of the evangelist. However, Luke also portrayed aspects of truth, so, for example, when he reports of the high esteem, yes, even friendly affection of Herod towards the Baptist.

In my research I encountered a third cause, which is described and proved in detail in my book on John the Baptist [1]:

Herodias, grand-daughter of Herod the Great, unscrupulously pursued the aim of restoration of the Jewish realm, like it had been under her grand-father. Essential parts, however, like Judea were incorporated into the Roman realm. Strategically unimportant regions, like Perea, for example, remained under the rule of Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. Herodias left her first husband and father of her daughter

Salome, and married her uncle Antipas in 28 AD. From this position she agitated against Roman supremacy in Palestine. Under the cover name "Fig Tree" a wide-branched conspiracy against Rome was organized. The overall power-political structure was not in favour of her aims, however. Additionally, a religious movement that considered more dangers to have their origin in the Jewish priesthood and in the magistrate than in the occupation force existed in Palestine. This movement was even known in Rome by the name of "Vineyard". (Please take note of the many figures of speech of Jesus designating the "Fig Tree" as something negative, and the "Vineyard" as positive.) As a consequence of the strong popular movement caused by John, that gave rise to the fear of an overthrow, the plans of Herodias/Antipas seemed ultimately doomed. For the royal family there was a necessity to, within short range, win the people for themselves. What would have been a better suggestion than to unite the popular hero of noble descent with oneself, founded on the promise to in the long run install him as the religious head of the united Israel. A union of the Baptist with Salome could eliminate all interior political problems.

In point of fact this conclusion suggests itself, when one reads the report on the banquet of Herod in connection with the veil-dance (= the oriental bride dance) of Salome, and all the minor relating phrases.

John apparently brusquely refused this request. The honour of queen-mother and – daughter was most vehemently violated. He was beheaded, and his cut-off head was offered on a platter, also an oriental custom of that time.

This thesis is not provable historically, yet. But many side-details corroborate it, like a deep stab in the head of John. It is handed on that Salome, full of wrath of slandered honour, stabbed into the cut-off head. What else could have done so much damage to her honour that she would have lost her temper before the highly decorated guests? The news of the death of John spread like wildfire among the Jewish people. It is reported that death-lights burnt all over the country for three days and nights.

Something interesting, by the way: Antipas' nephew, and successor to the throne, King Herod Agrippa I was an ardent admirer of John the Baptist. Upon the news of his decapitation, he is said to have attempted suicide. As a consequence he became Antipas' rival and unveiled the conspiracy in Rome. As a member of the "Vineyard", Agrippa I was held in high esteem in Rome. In 39 AD Antipas and Herodias were banned to Gallia by Emperor Caligula. Two years before the Nabateans humiliated both through a devastating campaign against Perea. On this the historiographer reports pithily: "the People of the Jews considered this a punishment by God for the murder of John".

That parts of the Herodian Royal Family had sympathies for the Baptist is also supported by the assumption that Thomas, the apostle of John, and later on of Jesus, was a son of Herod the Great.

What happened to the Movement of John after the death of the Baptist? Herod Antipas inflicted an interdiction of speech and assembly upon all apostles of John. The danger of revolution was still not banned, yet. Rather it was increased through the murder of the Baptist. A majority was driven into exile.

The rest assembled under the leadership of Jesus, yet, was persecuted as long as they lived. For a long time Herod Antipas took Jesus to be John resurrected from the dead.

Reading the Baptist's true biography, many sermons, actions, and events in Jesus' life become truly understandable. Even though the way had been prepared, Jesus had to take it, exposed to utmost danger, and bring it to fulfilment. A mission beyond comparison in the history of mankind.

The world is full of prophesies and visions of dread. The biblical ones are only a small portion, and hardly paid heed to. The truth is, however, that especially the words of the Biblical prophets fulfilled themselves to the jot. The return of John at the end of days will be no exception.

[1] Altinger, Hans Bernd: Johannes der Täufer Sein wahres Leben und Wirken Seine Wiederkehr, Drei Ulmen Verlag – München, ISBN 3-926087-20-X, Marketing: POSS Verlag

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