

JOHN THE BAPTIST BEHEADED.

MARK 6:17-29.

Golden Text—‘Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul’.

—— Matt. 10:28. ——

JOHN the Baptist was the last of the prophets, and the greatest, in that the special favour was granted to him of being the forerunner and introducer of the Messiah. Aside from his privilege in this respect and his faithfulness in the position to which he was called, we see in the man a most worthy and beautiful character. He was self-sacrificing and devoted to God—willing to fare on locusts and wild honey, to be clothed in coarse clothing and to make his abode in the desert, because the special service to which he was called required such conditions.

Then when the multitudes, drawn by the power of God manifested in him, came to him from every quarter, and he became very popular,* never did he seem lifted up with pride and vanity. Even when the Son of God came to be baptised of him, instead of becoming vain under such an honour, he shrank from the task, saying, ‘I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me?’ No thought of envy or self-exaltation seems to have entered his mind. He was willing that his glory should be totally eclipsed by the presence of the one greater than he—his cousin according to the flesh—yet whose shoe’s latchet he declared himself unworthy to loose. ‘He must increase’, said he, ‘but I must decrease’; and while the fame of Jesus was being noised abroad, the worthy prophet soon found himself within the confines of a prison dungeon

where he was cruelly beheaded, as the world’s reward for his faithfulness to his mission.⁺

And his disciples, who had become the disciples of Jesus, hearing of it, came and took his body and buried it, and went and told Jesus. No doubt, the Lord sympathised with the sadness of the occasion, and groaned in spirit as he did at the grave of Lazarus,—because the time for the powers of darkness to work had not yet come to an end, and until it does those that live godly shall suffer persecution; and often, as also in his own case subsequently, even unto death. Evidently John’s course was finished. He had fulfilled his mission and proved his worthiness of a distinguished place in the earthly phase of the Kingdom of God. Consequently there was no effort on the Lord’s part to interfere with, or to influence, the powers of darkness that for a year restrained John’s liberty and finally took his life.

While the Lord never in any way interfered with the course of this world, either to instruct, reprove or overpower, but confined his ministry in all these respects to Israel, the course of John in boldly and openly reproving the king, who was not an Israelite, but a Gentile and a godless and wicked tyrant, was in marked contrast. We are at a loss to account for this contrast, and for the seeming lack of wisdom on John’s part in this matter, until we call to mind the typical character of John to which attention has already been called. (See M. DAWN, VOL. II., Chap. VIII.) In this view of the matter we see King Herod as the representative of the world power of the present time, Herodias, his unlawful wife, as the representative or type of the ecclesiastical powers of Christendom now seeking and longing for union with, and the co-operation of, the civil powers. Such

* In a June 1991 study led by Frank Shallieu entitled ‘*The Final Week of Jesus’ Life... Prophetic Implications for Our Day*’, the following is stated [discussing Matt. 21:7-9]: ‘In antitype, the Lord will provide circumstances whereby for a short time, there will be opportunity for the truth message to be heard by the public... A popular general message is also shown by the Elijah picture in regard to the *dividing* of the waters (2 Kings 2:8)... When the truth is popular for a very short time in the future, the present-day scribes and Pharisees (the religious leaders of Christendom) will be jealous and angry... They will want to squelch talk of a coming Kingdom. Truth popularity will trigger evil in the current nominal Church leaders... As the popular message merges into the smiting message, public sentiment will turn against the feet members.’—Pp. 11-13

⁺ *New Testament Studies* by Frank Shallieu [Mark 6:29] states, in part: ‘In the antitype, the beheading is yet to come. John the Baptist pictures the feet members. Jesus at the First Advent was a type of the present glorified Lord at his Second Advent. John’s announcing Jesus’ (literal) presence in the flesh pictures the feet members’ announcing Jesus’ Second (invisible) Presence.’—p. 37

is to be the result of the present movements in both civil and ecclesiastical circles for closer bonds of sympathy and co-operation. John, as we have shown, was a striking type of the true Church in the 'harvest' or end of this age.[‡] We, like John, must stand aloof from all those whose cry is, 'A confederacy, a confederacy!' (Isa. 8:11-13); and by our teaching and example declare *unlawful* the proposed and sure to come union between church and civil government.

The type is a striking one, and the fulfilment thus far is none the less so; but carried to its end it gives to the faithful overcoming Church a premonition of the approaching final test of faithfulness. As the course of John incurred the wrath of the infamous woman who ruled the king and thereby accomplished John's beheading, so the course of the John class—the true Church—will incur the wrath of the antitype. And the culmination of that wrath will doubtless bring about the dark night foretold by the Lord and the prophet, and typified by John's imprisonment (John 9:4; Isa. 21:12), wherein no man can labour in the great 'harvest' work.[†] And as John never emerged from that prison, save to enter the deeper dungeon of the grave from whence God will in due time bring him forth to power and glory, so when the coming night imprisons and fetters the faithful elect, the only deliverance they can hope for will be through the depths of the valley of the shadow of death into the

glorious Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whose they are and whom they serve.

—ZION'S WATCH TOWER, January 1, 1895.—

[‡] *New Testament Studies* by Frank Shallieu [discussing **Mark 13:34**] states the following, in part, regarding the end of the age: 'Here in verse 34, the "servants" are watchmen. A "porter" is a servant who watches at the door or from a tower and warns those of the household. . . . The porter would be an individual on the scene at the very end of the age.'—p. 103

[†] *New Testament Studies* [**Mark 13:34**] by Frank Shallieu states further: 'The eleventh-hour workers of the Parable of the Penny will become *discernibly involved* in the Harvest work (Matt. 20:1-16). They are on the scene *earlier* but come in *late* to do *bigger* works. . . . Points to be noted in the Wise and Foolish Virgins Parable are as follows: (1) There was a *delay*. (2) *All fell asleep* regarding prophecy. (3) At *midnight* came the cry "Behold the Bridegroom!" (4) When all awoke, only the wise virgins had *extra oil* in their lamps. (5) But the wise virgins did not walk in the door immediately. A slight time period intervened, for a *while* the foolish virgins went to the marketplace to buy oil, the *wise went in to the marriage*. Thus the cry went forth at midnight, but there was a tiny delay before *those who were ready* went in to the marriage. . . . At "midnight," as it were, the penny was given, but time was needed to use it. At midnight, the Bridegroom announcement was made, but the rapture did not occur immediately. . . . All vineyard workers—including the foolish virgins—will get the penny, the privilege of service, but not all will use it.'—Pp. 103-104