

The Martyrdom of Zechariah

A translation and introduction

by Tony Burke and Sarah Veale

The *Martyrdom of Zechariah* (*Mart. Zech.*; CANT 180.1/4)¹ is a pastiche of biblical and apocryphal stories related to the life of John the Baptist, including the death of Zechariah from the *Protevangelium of James*, the beheading of John from the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, and the final fates of Herod Antipas and his family attested in the *Epistle of Herod to Pilate* and elsewhere. Alongside these tales can be found the centerpiece of the text: John's nocturnal flight with the four archangels from his hiding place in the holy mountain to the temple where the reanimated Zechariah and his young son are baptized by Jesus. Much of *Mart. Zech.* has parallels in the *Decapitation of John the Baptist*, including their shared attribution to Eurippios, the "second disciple" of John.

Contents

Mart. Zech. begins with Herod's decree to kill the infants in Jerusalem and its impact on the families of Jesus and John (chaps. 1–2). As in the Gospel of Matthew, an angel appears to Joseph and tells him to take Jesus and Mary into the Egyptian desert to protect them from Herod. Elizabeth similarly flees with the infant John, but leaves her husband Zechariah behind. As a result, Zechariah is questioned by Herod's soldiers about John's whereabouts. When Zechariah refuses to disclose their location, Herod's men slay Zechariah in front of the temple altar. Zechariah's spilled blood hardens like a stone, but his body disappears. The disappearance of Zechariah causes confusion among his fellow priests when they seek him out. A disembodied voice informs them, however, that Zechariah was murdered, prompting the community to mourn for seven days.

Following Zechariah's death, the narrative shifts to Elizabeth and John and their flight into the mountains (chap. 3). Elizabeth is nearly captured by Herod's men, but the archangel Uriel transports them to a safe chasm in the mountain, where the angel provides them with bread and they draw water from a spring. Herod's soldiers come seeking Elizabeth and John, but they are unable to find them (chap. 4). The story then returns to Zechariah, whose dead body is tended to by the four archangels, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael. Jesus and John are spirited to the temple, where Zechariah is brought back to life, baptized, and provided with a formal burial. John is also baptized at this time (chap. 5). After his return from Jerusalem, John is weaned from nursing and takes up his traditional diet of locusts and wild honey, though here the wild honey is said to be the sweet water flowing from the spring (chap. 6).

1. The text is listed twice in CANT, one time for each manuscript, as 180.1/BHG 831 (Messina) and 180.4/BHG 833f (Athens).

When John reaches the age of thirteen months, the angel delivers news to Elizabeth that Herod is dead and that she and John should depart from the chasm and join Mary and Jesus in Galilee (7:1–3). This movement is made in fulfillment of several prophecies, most of which derive from Matthew’s fulfillment quotations (7:4). At five years old, John is given his clothing of camel’s hair and leather belt (chap. 8).

We next meet John when he is twelve years old (though this age is clearly a copying error), during the reign of the tetrarch Herod Antipas. Here we learn of John’s conflicts with Herod and subsequent imprisonment (chaps. 9–10). Jesus returns to the story at this juncture in a flashback to his baptism at the Jordan (chap. 11). The interruption in the narrative is explained by the declaration that Jesus “knew before” that John would be imprisoned. The story then returns to John and his beheading at the request of Herod’s daughter Herodias (chap. 12). As in the canonical gospel accounts, Herodias, having danced for Herod, requests as a gift John’s head on a plate. Herod complies and the head is brought to Herodias, who gives it to her mother. *Mart. Zech.* adds the detail that John’s head is first given to dogs, who then bring it to his disciples. Elizabeth is notified of John’s murder by the archangel Uriel, who brings Elizabeth and John’s disciples to the temple so that they can bury John alongside his father. A voice promises Elizabeth that the deaths of Zechariah and John will be avenged (chap. 13).

The remainder of the text focuses on the divine punishment of Herod and his family (chap. 14). Herodias meets her fate when she falls into a well on a stormy day. Although she survives the fall, her head is trapped and she is decapitated when her attendants attempt to rescue her. The attendants bring her head to Herod, who receives it on his knees. Brief mention is made also of the death of Herod’s son, a character not previously mentioned in the text. Herod’s wife, here named Herodias, becomes blind in her left eye, and then Herod dies from dropsy and worms. Herod does not receive a proper burial, as the ground rejects him, leaving him to be eaten by birds. Then another new character, Herod’s first wife, Procla, appears; she gathers up her possessions and gives them to the poor men as a bribe to compel their attendance as mourners near his body. The text concludes with an attribution to Eurippios and a short doxology (chap. 15).

Manuscripts and Editions

Mart. Zech. is one of five Greek John the Baptist texts described in detail in two works by Alexander Berendts, published in 1895 and 1904.² *Mart. Zech.* is listed as Recension 1 (related to Church Slavic Recension 1); Recension 2 is *Decap. Bapt.* (CANT 180.2; BHG 832; related to Church Slavic Recension 2); and Recension 3 is a short text titled the *Birth of the Holy John, the Forerunner* (CANT 180.3; BHG 833).³ Recension 4 includes four separate items: (1) the *Life and Conduct of John the Baptist* (BHG 838; unpublished); (2) *Hypomnema on John the Baptist* by Symeon Metaphrastes (CANT 182; BHG 835–837b); (3) another text titled *Decapitation of the Forerunner* (BHG 838C; unpublished) composed primarily of biblical material but finishing with the story of the death of Herodias’s daughter; and (4) a text with a title, but not contents,⁴ similar

2. Berendts, *Studien über Zacharia-Apokryphen* (for *Mart. Zech.* see esp. 63–80, with commentary 81–104); Berendts, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*, esp. 41–47, 63–64.

3. Recension 2 (*Decap. Bapt.*) and Recension 3 (*Birth of the Holy John, the Forerunner*) are presented elsewhere in this volume in translations by Tony Burke.

4. According to Berendts, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*, 15.

to *Mart. Zech.*: *On the Birth of the Holy John the Baptist and on the Perfection and Martyrdom of His Father Zechariah and on the Beheading of the Forerunner* (BHG 838d; unpublished). The only published text in this list, *Hypom. Bapt.*, has a rich manuscript tradition—the Pinakes database lists more than sixty sources, many of which are noted by Berendts.⁵ To date, this recension has appeared only in Latin translation—by the early hagiographer Luigi Lippomano and in the revision by Laurentius Surius—but without acknowledgment of the manuscript source.⁶ The noncanonical traditions used in the *Hypom. Bapt.* are few: it includes the report of the murder of Zechariah and an allusion to Elizabeth and John taking shelter in a cave, and it finishes with an account of the death of Herod's daughter. Finally, Recension 5 is the *Life and Martyrdom of John the Baptist* (CANT 181), which was published in a Greek edition and French translation by François Nau, and then in an English translation by Andrew Bernhard.⁷ In some manuscripts this text is attributed to another disciple of John: Mark the Evangelist, who is said to have become a follower of Peter.

In 1895 Berendts was aware of *Mart. Zech.* only in its Church Slavonic translation. It is found in the *Great Menaion Reader* (*Velikiye Chet'yi-Minei*), the official Russian Orthodox monologion compiled by the Metropolitan Makarius of Moscow (r. 1542–1563). Berendts's study includes a German translation of the Church Slavonic text from the *Menaion* based on an edition published in 1868 on the basis of three manuscripts: two from the State Historical Museum in Moscow—Synodal Coll. 796 (174), fols. 190–195 (16th cent.; = de Santos Otero 73)⁸ and Dormition Cathedral 784 (986), fols. 135–136 (16th cent.; = de Santos Otero 69)—and the Sophia manuscript of 1541 now in the Saint Petersburg Theological Academy.⁹ The *Menaion* includes *Mart. Zech.* on September 5 along with four other pieces devoted to Zechariah. The text is shorter than what is preserved in Greek; it comprises only chaps. 1–9:1. *Mart. Zech.* appears also in a second monologion assembled by the Moscow priest Ioann Miljutin in 1646–1654 and preserved in Moscow, State Historical Museum, Synodal Coll. 797.¹⁰ Berendts found two additional non-*Menaion* manuscripts that he believed contained the text, though, as it turns out, only one of these is a true witness to *Mart. Zech.*: Kyiv, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Church Archaeological Museum of the

5. Berendts, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*, 12–15.

6. Luigi Lippomano (Aloisius Lipomanus), *Sanctorum priscorum patrum vitae numero centum sexagintatres, per gravissimos et probatissimos auctores conscripta*, 8 vols. (Rome: ex Officina Salviana and Venice: ad Signum Spei, 1551–1560), 6:199–203; Laurentius Surius, *Historiae seu vitae sanctorum, juxta optimam coloniensem editionem*, 13 vols. (1570–1575; Turin: Marietti, 1875–1880), 8:706–23. Paul Peeters (in Delehaye and Peeters, *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, 17) notes that the text is present in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 1474 and gr. 1475, though he does not state explicitly that these were Lippomano's sources.

7. Berendts, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*, 15–17; François Nau, “Histoire de saint Jean Baptiste attribuée à saint Marc l'Évangéliste,” *PO* 4 (1908): 521–41; Andrew Bernhard, “The Life and Martyrdom of John the Baptist,” *MNTA* 1:247–67.

8. For de Santos Otero's list of manuscripts, see *HUAA* 2:1–32.

9. Published in Archeografičeskaja Kommissija, *Velikija minei četii sobrannyja vserossijskim metropolitom Makariem: Sentjabr', dni 1–13* (Saint Petersburg: Tipografija Imperatorskoj Akademii Nauk, 1868), cols. 278–81. The *Mart. Zech.* portion is translated in Berendts, *Studien über Zacharia-Apokryphen*, 71–80; M. R. James (*Lost Apocrypha*, 74–77) includes a summary of the text and a response to some of Berendts's arguments about the Zechariah traditions.

10. Berendts, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*, 20 (not included in de Santos Otero's list).

Kyiv Theological Academy Coll., 516 (0.5.79), fols. 1–5 (16th/17th cent.; = de Santos Otero 8).¹¹

When Berendts returned to the topic of *Mart. Zech.* in 1904, he had become aware of a Greek manuscript of the text—Athens, Ethnikē Bibliothēkē tēs Hellados, gr. 1007, fols. 210r–213v (17th cent.)¹²—via an 1896 article by Aleksandr Kirpičnikov. The article includes only two brief excerpts from the text (1:1–2 and 5:1–6:1),¹³ but Berendts was able to use Kirpičnikov's complete transcription and verified his work against the manuscript. Berendts found the manuscript difficult to work with, remarking that it was replete with orthographic and grammatical errors rendering the text incomprehensible in sections.¹⁴ Once again, he hoped for further breakthroughs, and he did not have to wait long. In his afterword he mentions having been introduced to a second Greek manuscript: Messina, Biblioteca Universitaria, S. Salv. 30, fols. 9v–10v (1307/1308), which had escaped his notice because of a misidentification of the manuscript as a witness to *Decap. Bapt.*¹⁵ An excerpt, once again corresponding to 5:1–6:1, was published alongside Kirpičnikov's text from Athens gr. 1007 in a 1910 volume of the *Acta Sanctorum*.¹⁶

Berendts's second work contributed significantly to the study of the text also by identifying additional Church Slavic manuscripts that he had examined:¹⁷

Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Wuk 48, fols. 132r–135r (14th cent.; = de Santos Otero 4)

Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Solovetsky Monastery (F. 717) 473, fol. 222r (17th cent.; = de Santos Otero 46); chaps. 5:1–6:3 only¹⁸

Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Solovetsky Monastery (F. 717) 617, fols. 45r–47v (16th cent.; = de Santos Otero 47)

Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Solovetsky Monastery (F. 717) 647, fols. 322r–326r (16th/17th cent.; = de Santos Otero 52)

11. The other manuscript is Moscow, Russian State Library, Museum Coll. 435, fols. 229–234 (15th cent.; = de Santos Otero 94). The text, cataloged as BHG 833g, is an excerpt of the martyrdom of Zechariah from *Prot. Jas.*

12. Berendts, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*, 2–4.

13. Kirpičnikov, review of *Apocrypha anecdota*, 185–86.

14. Berendts, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*, 4.

15. Berendts, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*, 63–64. The manuscript came to Berendts's attention via Hippolyte Delahaye, "Catalogus Codicum Hagiographicorum Graecorum Monasterii S. Salvatoris nunc Bibliothecae Universitatis Messanensis," *Anboll* 42 (1904): 19–75 at 41–47. The manuscript also has been assigned the designation BHG 1881m, placing it in proximity with BHG 1881 and 1881p, which designate another Martyrdom of Zechariah based entirely on *Prot. Jas.* 22–24 but, in Berendts's words, "in recht eigenartiger recension" (in quite a peculiar recension) (*Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*, 4 n. 1). Berendts lists three manuscripts of BHG 1881: Athos, Monē Ibērōn, 275 (Lampros 4395) (12th cent.) and 928 (Lampros 5048) (17th cent.); and Moscow, State Historical Museum, Sinod. gr. 163 (Vlad. 345), fols. 4r–4v (11th cent.). BHG 1881p comprises Athos, Bibliothēkē tou Prōtatou (Karyes), 2 (Lampros 2) (11th cent.).

16. Delahaye and Peeters, *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, 16–17.

17. Berendts, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*, 19–28.

18. According to the review of de Santos Otero, *HUAA* 2, by Francis J. Thomson, this text is "a later revision of the translation by Theophanes, abbot of Konstamonitou, Athos, while in exile at Solovki." *Slavonic and East European Review* 63, no. 1 (1985): 73–98 at 74.

Moscow, State Historical Museum, A. S. Uvarov 1051 (409), fols. 21v–24r (16th cent.; = de Santos Otero 82)

Moscow, Russian State Library, Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius 664 (404), fols. 6r–9r (17th cent.; = de Santos Otero 109)

Moscow, Russian State Library, Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius 665, fols. 6r–9r (1627)¹⁹

Vilnius, Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, 79 (192), fols. 40v–43r (16th cent.; = de Santos Otero 145)²⁰

To Berendts's list, Aurelio de Santos Otero in 1978 added the following:

Kyiv, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Metropolitan Makarius Coll. 27 (Aa. 105), fols. 9r–12r, 134r–135r (16th cent.; = de Santos Otero 9)

Lviv, Ivan Franko National University, Cod. I, F. 15 (Zamoyski MS), fols. 10r–12r (16th cent.; = de Santos Otero 57)²¹

Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Society of Lovers of Ancient Literature Coll. (F. 536) 185 (5460), fols. 9r–10v (16th cent.; = de Santos Otero 42)

Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Solovetsky Monastery (F. 717) 643, fols. 395v–400r (16th cent.; = de Santos Otero 52)

Moscow, Moscow University Library, 262, fols. 171r–175r (17th cent.; = de Santos Otero 123)

Moscow, State Historical Museum, P. I. Ščukin 432, fols. 6r–10r (1548; = de Santos Otero 61)

Moscow, Russian State Library, I. Ja. Lukaševič 89 (1073), fols. 539v–541r (17th cent.; = de Santos Otero 102)

Moscow, Russian State Library, V. M. Undol'skij 590, fols. 17v–21r (16th cent.; = de Santos Otero 118)²²

Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia, A. F. Gil'ferding (F. 182) 42, fols. 170r–174r (16th cent.; = de Santos Otero 160)

Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia, General Coll. (F. 560) F. I.869, fols. 36v–39r (16th cent.; = de Santos Otero 157)

An edition of the Church Slavic tradition remains a desideratum, particularly given the text's apparent popularity in the Slavia Orthodoxa church and both the paucity and the quality of the Greek manuscripts.

Literary and Theological Importance

Several of the manuscripts preserving *Mart. Zech.* are collections of readings for the commemoration of saints. The text itself testifies to its function as a reading for the

19. This manuscript is not in de Santos Otero's list.

20. Thomson includes in his corrected list also Vilnius, Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, 103 (227), fols. 79r–85v, 56r–57v (16th cent.; = de Santos Otero 146). Note too that Thomson's list lacks de Santos Otero 109.

21. Published in Ivan Franko, *Apokrifi i legendy z ukraïnskikh rukopisiv*, 5 vols. (Lviv: Nakladom Naukovoho Tovaristva imeni Ševčenko, 1896–1910), 2:146–47.

22. Considered by de Santos Otero as a witness to *Mart. Zech.*, but Berendts (*Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*, 22–25) was not convinced its correspondences with other *Mart. Zech.* manuscripts were significant enough to assign it to the Church Slavic Recension 1.

remembrance of Zechariah (15:1), who is celebrated, along with Elizabeth, on September 5 in the Eastern Orthodox Church. Like other texts about New Testament figures, *Mart. Zech.* draws on canonical and noncanonical sources, combined perhaps with some materials created by the compiler, to create an expansive biography of its subject. The text opens with a mention of the flight to Egypt from Matthew but, surprisingly, nothing from Luke on the conception and birth of John. *Protevangelium of James* 22–24 supplies the flight to the mountain and the death of Zechariah. The angel's announcement of Herod's death is taken from Matthew along with a compilation of the various testimonia that make up the evangelist's infancy narrative. For John's adult ministry, the text draws on the accounts from the New Testament gospels of his baptism of Jesus (particularly Matthew's version) and his imprisonment, and then reports, almost verbatim, the party of Herod and the decapitation of John from Matthew and Mark.

The text finishes with a description of the gruesome deaths of the Herods. This story appears in several sources. In Greek literature, it is reported in two other Baptist texts—*Decap. Bapt.* 9 and *Hypom. Bapt.* 23, though note the latter mentions only the daughter's death—as well as the *Epistle of Herod to Pilate*, extant in Syriac as early as the sixth century; the *Chronicon Paschale* (350), a world chronicle composed in the seventh century; and the *Ecclesiastical History* (10.20) of Nicephorus Callistus (ca. 1256–ca. 1335).²³ Farther east, it appears in Solomon of Basra's *Book of the Bee* 41 (composed ca. 1222) and the *Life of John the Baptist* (13:5–9) attributed to Serapion, composed likely in Egypt sometime in the fourteenth century.²⁴ In the West it can be found in Jacob of Voragine's *Golden Legend* (125), in an account derived from Nicephorus Callistus. The basic contours of the story are that Herod's daughter was walking on a frozen pond or river when the ice broke and she fell in, thus severing her head. The girl's head was brought to Herodias and she burst into tears. The parallels with the Gospels' account of John's death are apparent; Nicephorus Callistus even adds the detail that Herod's daughter was dancing on the ice when she fell in, and in some versions of the tale, the girl's head was cut from her trapped body by the sword used to decapitate John (*Life Bapt. Serap.*; Solomon of Basra, *Bk. Bee*; *Decap. Bapt. Rec.* B 9:6 similarly mentions a sword but does not identify it specifically with the weapon that killed John). Herodias also receives punishment. In the *Epistle of Pilate to Herod* and *Bk. Bee* she is struck blind, though *Bk. Bee* adds that the hand she used to hold John's head dries up, as does her tongue, with which she reviled him, and finally "Satan entered her and she was bound with fetters." The *Life of John the Baptist* by Serapion is even more gruesome: "As for Herodias, her eyes were pulled out from her head and fell on the ground. Her room collapsed on top of her, the ground opened its mouth and its throat swallowed her, and then she sank to the depths of hell, still alive" (13:5). In one of several accounts presented in the *Golden Legend*, Herodias dies at Herod's birthday party when the decapitated head of John blows on her face. A few of the sources include details on the death of Herod: *Life Bapt. Serap.* says he suffered a stroke, and in *Ep. Herod Pil.* Herod tells Pilate that he has dropsy and that worms are

23. For the latter two accounts, see Athanasius Vasiliev, ed., *Anecdota graeco-byzantina, pars prior* (Moscow: Imperial University, 1893), iv. Burke ("Serapion's *Life of John the Baptist*," 290–91) offers another overview of the entire range of sources for the deaths of the Herods.

24. On this determination, see the introduction to the text by Slavomír Čéplö in *MNTA* 1:275–76.

beginning to issue from his body as a sign of judgment for his role in John's death. The letter also mentions a son of Herod named Azbonius who is near death.

The account of the deaths of the Herods in *Mart. Zech.* has the most affinities with *Ep. Herod Pil.*: Herodias becomes blind in her left eye, Herod has dropsy and is consumed by worms, and a son is mentioned (though here he is beset by demons and dies of choking). The major departures are the mention of John's head being placed in the lap of Herod, not Herodias (though perhaps this is due to scribal error; the same change occurs in *Decap. Bapt. Rec. A* 9:3); the added detail that Herod's body was not accepted by the earth and was devoured by birds (also found in *Decap. Bapt. Rec. A* 9:5); and the inclusion of an otherwise unattested former wife of Herod named Procla—the namesake of the wife of Pilate according to *Ep. Herod Pil.*, the *Handing Over of Pilate*, and the *Martyrdom of Pilate*. The deaths of the Herods reflect the motif of “retributive justice” prevalent in (though not limited to) contemporary literature, including Jewish and Christian texts. Perhaps the most well-known example of the motif can be found in the story of another Herod, Agrippa I, whose death at the hands of an angel of God is presented in Acts (12:20–23) directly after accounts of his attacks on the church in Jerusalem (12:1–19). Wayward rulers are frequently victims in such accounts, perhaps as a way for the powerless to see justice prevail against the powerful; and punishment continues after death, not only for rulers, but for all sinners, who suffer according to the principle of *lex talionis*—the punishment fits the crime.²⁵ The fate of the historical Herods is far different than what is presented in Christian texts. According to Josephus, Herod Antipas and Herodias died in exile near Lyons after Herod's removal from power in 39 CE (*Ant.* 18.252–55; *J. W.* 2.183). Herodias's daughter, named Salome according to Josephus, went on to marry Philip, and later Aristobulus, with whom she had three sons (*Ant.* 18.137). But Christian writers could not abide such a peaceful end for these archvillains. *Mart. Zech.* and these other texts offer their readers a much more satisfying sequel to the deaths of Zechariah and John, one in which the Herods die in ways that are more fitting for their crimes.

The blending of these texts in *Mart. Zech.* illustrates the importance of both *Prot. Jas.*, which had a quasi-canonical status in the East, and the account of the deaths of the Herods, which carries an air of history, as seen by its use in the *Chronicon Paschale* and other sources. Despite their characterization as noncanonical, these traditions have an authority to them that, at least for this author, equals that of the canonical gospels.

Of the other materials in the text, some have parallels in traditions appearing in *erōtapokriseis* (question-and-answer) texts.²⁶ One such text is extant in Church Slavic under the title “Narrative from the unknown, true books of Genesis.”²⁷ A question is

25. For a discussion of the perimortem and postmortem retributive motifs, see Ra'anan S. Boustán, “Immolating Emperors: Spectacles of Imperial Suffering and the Making of a Jewish Minority Culture in Late Antiquity,” *BibInt* 17 (2009): 207–38, esp. 210–21. On Acts 12:20–23 in the context of “death of tyrant” narratives, which often involve consumption by worms, see O. Wesley Allen Jr., *The Death of Herod: The Narrative and Theological Function of Retribution in Luke-Acts*, SBLDS 158 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997).

26. On this literature, see the scholarship cited by Philip L. Tite in *MNTA* 2:360–65. The discussion here on the *Mart. Zech.* parallels draws on Berendts, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*, 34–41.

27. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Wuk 45, fols. 353v–355r (15th cent.); published by Aleksandr I. Jacimirskij, “Kū istorii apokrifovū i legendū vū južnoslavjanskoj pisimennosti,” *Izvēstija otdělenija russkago jazyka i slovesnosti* 15, no. 1 (1910): 1–62.

asked here about the baptisms of Zechariah and John; the response, corresponding to the narrative in *Mart. Zech.* 5:1–6:1, is given as follows: “The Lord baptized the two after he came out of Egypt with the four angels. After Zechariah had been killed in the Holy of Holies, he baptized the two there, after he raised Zechariah from the dead. But he brought John out of the mountain, and again sent him into the mountain. Zechariah, however, fell asleep again and was buried under the altar. The Lord himself went to Egypt. But all this happened in one night.”²⁸ Berendts notes additional Church Slavonic manuscripts that have the same question and answer but with the question being posed to Gregory of Nazianzus by Basil the Great.²⁹ Berendts was not able to find a Greek version of the exchange but did note one manuscript—Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ashburnham 1549 (16th cent.)—that contains a question-and-answer exchange between Basil and Gregory that begins with a question about Zechariah. Berendts did not follow up on the manuscript, but he does mention other Basil and Gregory exchanges from Gregory’s *Quaestiones ac responsiones* (CPG 3064–66, 3068–80) that touch on the material in *Mart. Zech.* dealing with the time the Holy Family resided in Egypt (see 1:2). One question addresses how long they spent there, with the answer given as twelve months. Another addresses where Jesus lived, with answers given as variations on the name of Alphaeus, and a partial exchange refers to the murder of Zechariah by Herod (see 3:5). *Mart. Zech.* and the parallel *erōtapokriseis* texts testify to a desire to fill in some of the enduring blanks in Christian literature about Jesus and his contemporaries; particularly important here is that Zechariah and John receive baptism—for Zechariah because he died before Jesus began his preaching mission and for John, presumably, because, as the Baptist states in Matt 3:14, “I need to be baptized by you.” The childhood baptism is also presented as an interpretation of the exchange between Jesus and his antagonists in the temple where Jesus asks, “Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” (Mark 11:30 par.). In the Gospels, the question is about the authority of John, but in *Mart. Zech.* (11:4–5) it is about John’s own baptism, which is shown to be from heaven.

Original Language, Date, and Provenance

Little can be said with certainty about the time and place of origin for *Mart. Zech.* The *Stichometry of Nicephorus*, appended to the ninth-century patriarch’s *Chronography*, lists among the apocrypha of the Old Testament a “(Book of) Zacharias, the father of John.”³⁰ The father of John is often confused with the biblical prophet, even by the author of *Prot. Jas.*, who seems to have created the story of the death of Zechariah on the basis of Matthew’s and Luke’s statements that the prophet was “murdered between the sanctuary and the altar” (Matt 23:35//Luke 11:51). So the *Stichometry* may have erroneously placed a text about John’s father among Old Testament apocrypha or correctly placed a text associated with the preexilic prophet that bears a faulty attribution. The earliest material evidence for *Mart. Zech.* is the Messina codex, which provides a *terminus ante quem* of 1307/1308. But *Mart. Zech.* is related in some way to

28. Translated from Berendts’s German in *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*, 34.

29. Berendts, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*, 37–40.

30. Translation in Wilhelm Schneemelcher, “General Introduction,” in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. Robert McLachlan Wilson, 2 vols. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991–1992), 1:9–75 at 41–42.

Decap. Bapt.—both texts bookend the narrative with material derived from *Prot. Jas.* and the deaths of the Herods, and in between narrate several other tales: how an angel provided food and water for John and his mother, their return home after the death of Herod, John's imprisonment and decapitation, and John's burial with Zechariah in the temple. They both conclude with an attribution to Eurippos and an encouragement to honor John on his feast day. If *Mart. Zech.* is the earlier of the two texts, as Berendts believed,³¹ then its composition precedes the earliest manuscript of *Decap. Bapt.*: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 683 of the ninth/tenth century. The parallels in the Ps.-Gregory question-and-answer texts could help narrow that date further if it could be determined when these texts were composed, because it is more likely that they are based on *Mart. Zech.* than the reverse; unfortunately, the fluidity of the materials, with the number of questions varying in the witnesses, makes difficult a determination of when the text incorporated the Zechariah traditions. The earliest known manuscript of Gregory's *Quaestiones ac responsiones* is Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 342 (11th cent.), and Berendts's examples are as early as the twelfth century. As for a *terminus post quem*, *Mart. Zech.* may have derived its account of the deaths of the Herods from *Ep. Herod Pil.*, which is extant in sixth-/seventh-century Syriac manuscripts. *Mart. Zech.* was certainly composed in Greek, as indicated by its incorporation of portions of *Prot. Jas.* and the canonical gospels in Greek, somewhere in the Greek East, from where it spread into Slavic lands. The lack of attestation in Latin suggests it originated after the decline of the Western church in the late fifth century.

Eurippos (Herpios in Athens, gr. 1007; Eurippos/Egrippios in *Decap. Bapt.*), "the second of John's disciples according to strictness" (15:1), is otherwise unattested in Christian literature, but he is not the only follower of John mentioned in canonical and noncanonical texts. In the canonical gospels, John sends disciples to Jesus to ask him if he is "the one who is to come" (Matt 11:2–6//Luke 7:18–23), some of his disciples take his body away (Mark 6:29//Matt 14:12), their practices are juxtaposed with those who follow Jesus (Mark 2:18 par.; Luke 11:1), John encourages Andrew (John 1:25–29) and others (John 3:25–36) to leave him and join Jesus,³² and other disciples convert after Jesus's death (Acts 19:1–7; 18:24–28). According to *Life Mart. Bapt.*, John had forty disciples (3:3), one of whom was Mark the Evangelist, who is named as author of the text in some manuscripts (see the note to 10:3), and another was a certain Acholius, who takes the head of John while another six disciples take his body (10:1). The *Pseudo-Clementines* have more to say about John's disciples, including their belief that he was not dead but "concealed" (*Rec.* 1.54.8, 60.1, 63.1); that he, not Jesus, was the Messiah (*Rec.* 1.60.1–4); and that he had thirty chief disciples (*Rec.* 2.7–11; *Hom.* 2.13), including Helen and Simon, who succeeded Dositheus as "the first and most esteemed" among them. Perhaps this distinction given to Dositheus and Simon is the reason why Eurippos is here named "second" of John's disciples.

31. Berendts, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*, 5.

32. Also of note is the manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, syr. 178, fol. 1 (1785), which lists the disciples sent to Jesus by John. See Hermann Zotenberg, *Manuscripts Orientaux: Catalogues des Manuscrits Syriaques et Sabéens (Mandaïtes) de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1874), 124–26.

Translation

The following translation, the first in a modern language, is based on our critical edition of the two Greek *Mart. Zech.* manuscripts. Primacy is given to the Messina text since it is the oldest but also because it is far more intelligible than the Athens manuscript. Some variant readings from the Church Slavic tradition with bearings on the Greek text are provided in the notes along with parallels with the two recensions of *Decap. Bapt.* We have introduced chapter and verse divisions.

Sigla

A Athens, Ethnikē Bibliothēkē tēs Hellados, gr. 1007

M Messina, Biblioteca Universitaria, S. Salv. 30

DecapA *Decapitation of John the Forerunner* Rec. A

DecapB *Decapitation of John the Forerunner* Rec. B

Slav Berendts's German translation of Church Slavic Rec. 1

Bibliography

EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

Berendts, Alexander. *Studien über Zacharia-Apokryphen und Zacharias-Legenden*. Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche, 1895. (Includes a German translation of the Church Slavic text from the *Menaion* of Makarius, pp. 71–80.)

Delehaye, Hippolite, and Paul Peeters, eds. *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*. Vol. 3 (= *Acta Sanctorum* vol. 65). Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1910. (Zechariah and Elizabeth traditions are presented by Peeters on pp. 5–22 with partial publication of Messina, S. Salv. 30 and Athens, gr. 1007, pp. 16–17.)

Kirpičnikov, Aleksandr I. Review of *Apocrypha anecdota* by M. R. James. *Vizantinskij Vremennik* (*Byzantina Chronika*) 1, no. 1 (1896): 181–204. (Excerpt from Athens, gr. 1007, pp. 185–86.)

Speranskij, Michail N. “Slavjanskija apokrifičeskija evangelija.” Pages 73–92, 137–43 in vol. 2 of *Trudy VIII archeologičeskogo sūezda vŭ Moskvě, 1890*. Moscow: Tovariščestvo tip. A. I. Mamontova, 1895. (Includes a description of Moscow, Undoliskij 590.)

STUDIES

Berendts, Alexander. *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung der Zacharias- und Johannes-Apokryphen*. TU, N. F. 26.3. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1904.

Burke, Tony. “The New Testament and Other Early Christian Traditions in Serapion's *Life of John the Baptist*.” Pages 281–300 in *Christian Apocrypha: Receptions of the New Testament in Ancient Christian Apocrypha*. Edited by Jean-Michel Roessli and Tobias Nicklas. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014.

James, M. R. *The Lost Apocrypha of the Old Testament*. New York: Macmillan, 1920 (pp. 74–77).

The Martyrdom of Zechariah

The Martyrdom and Perfection of the Holy Prophet Zechariah, the Father of the Forerunner.

Decap. Bapt. 1

The flight from Herod's massacre

Matt 2:16; Prot. Jas.
22:1

Matt 2:13

Matt 2:16; Prot. Jas.
22:1
Prot. Jas. 22:3

1 ¹In the fortieth year of the reign of Herod,^a he sought to kill all the infants in Jerusalem.^b ²Then Joseph was warned by the angel^c saying, “*Get up, take the child and his mother,^d and flee into Egypt,*” which he did also. Taking up his child, he went into Egypt. There he stayed for twelve months at the house of Alphaeus,^e a certain man of God. ³And after searching for Jesus and not finding (him), Herod became angry and commanded all the infants^f in Bethlehem from two years and under to be killed. ⁴Then Elizabeth, taking up her child^g John, fled into the hill country.

*Decap. Bapt. 2; Birth
Bapt. 1*

The murder of Zechariah

2 ¹After Herod searched for John and did not find him, he sent his assassins to his father Zechariah and they said to him,^h “Where is your son?”ⁱ

²Zechariah said, “I am a minister of the Lord God; how do I know where my son is?”^j

a. A has “After our Lord Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the year forty-three of King Augustus” (cf. *DecapA* 1:1). “Fortieth” is supported by Slav and MS K of *DecapA*; the majority of the *DecapA* witnesses have “forty-second.” *DecapA* supports A with identifying the king here as Augustus, though note MSS JK have “Herod Augustus.” According to Josephus (*Ant.* 14.4.5) Herod reigned for thirty-seven years beginning in 40 BCE. *Life Mart. Bapt.* 1:1 places the birth of John 5,500 years minus six months after creation.

b. A has “Herod the king of Jerusalem sought to kill him.”

c. A has “by the angel Zōnthouthamouel, who is the servant of the Most High.” The angel is named Saphodamuel in Slav. On a possible Aramaic origin of the name, see Berendts, *Studien über Zacharia-Apokryphen*, 90.

d. In A, the angel’s command is in indirect speech and begins “to take the child.”

e. A has “Arphaeus.” Berendts (*Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*, 36–37) cites two question-and-answer manuscripts in which the question of where the Lord stayed in Egypt is answered with “in the house of Aphelos/Aphios.”

f. A has “commanded the children.”

g. A has “her son.”

h. For “said to him,” A has only the verb “attack,” though in the middle aorist form.

i. A again uses indirect speech, so that the assassins ask, “Where is his son John?”

j. In A, Zechariah says, “I do not know where my son is because I am ministering to the Lord God of Israel.”

³Departing, they told Herod the words of Zechariah. Exceedingly filled with^a anger, he said, “Is his son not about to rule in Israel?”^b ⁴Go, question him about his son, and if he produces his son, dismiss him, and if not, bring him to me.”^c

Prot. Jas. 23:2

⁵And the tyrants,^d going in to Zechariah, said to him, “Where is your son? Produce him. If you do not produce him,^e we will shed your blood near the temple of God.”^f

⁶Zechariah said, “Shed my blood. But the Lord will find my spirit in the heavens.”^g And they killed him on this night before the gates of the temple of God. ⁷He went, moving slowly toward the altar and there his blood was emptied out and it set like stone as a witness and a condemnation of Herod.

Prot. Jas. 23; Matt 23:35//Luke 11:51

⁸All the people went outside;^h and Zechariah did not go out into the meeting with them according to custom.ⁱ While he delayed, one of them, taking courage,^j went into the inner sanctuary. ⁹And he heard a voice coming out^k from the altar saying,^l “Zechariah has been murdered.” One of them going in saw the congealed blood, but the body had become^m invisible. ¹⁰Going outside, he announced to the people what had happened. And the people performed a lament for seven days.ⁿ

Prot. Jas. 24:1–3

Elizabeth and John take shelter in a mountain

3 ¹As Elizabeth was fleeing to the mountain, she was afraid since she thought she saw the assassins of Herod and she would be captured.^o ²She called out, saying, “Mountain of God, receive a mother with a child!”^p ³And the good^q God, who grants a request^r before it is asked, dispatched his archangel Uriel and he split that land in two. Having descended with them^s into the chasm,^t he prepared a dwelling place for the righteous ones and was providing for them.^u

Decap. Bapt. 3:1–4; Birth Bapt. 2–3

Prot. Jas. 23:3

a. A has “burning with.”

b. The parallel in *Prot. Jas.* lacks the negative; A is somewhat garbled: “Is his son not taking up to rule in Israel?”

c. A, with some emendation, has, “<Go>, question him, and if he will <not> produce his son, then kill him.”

d. A has “obedient tyrants.”

e. A begins the clause with “otherwise now.”

f. A has “near this temple.”

g. A has “will take the spirit to heaven.”

h. A has “in the morning all the people went into the temple” (cf. *DecapAB* 2:4).

i. A has “did not go out according to custom into their formal greeting” (cf. *DecapAB* 2:4).

j. A adds “lifted the gates.”

k. A lacks “coming out.”

l. A lacks “saying.”

m. A lacks the verb.

n. A does not specify the number of days for the lament, though there is a blank space in the manuscript at this point.

o. A has “A great fear fell upon her (because) she thought she would be captured by Herod’s assassins.”

p. A has “children,” though perhaps the accusative singular is intended.

q. A lacks “good.”

r. A adds “to the righteous.”

s. A has “together with her.”

t. M has “the pit,” likely due to an aural error.

u. A lacks “and was providing for them.”

⁴Having fortified everything around them outside^a and having filled up the place, he stood guard at the chasm.^b ⁵A spring of the sweetest water^c came out on the right,^d and on the left he placed bread.^e ⁶The holy Elizabeth was nourished with the bread and the water^f and John (was nourished) by her milk.

4 ¹Hearing that Elizabeth was in the mountain,^g Herod dispatched there the ones obedient to his tyrannical rule. ²They came up to the path before the chasm, and having searched again and not finding, they returned to Herod having uncovered nothing.^h

Zechariah and John are baptized in the temple

5 ¹When John had been in the desert for four months,ⁱ the Lord went from Egypt with the archangel^j to Bethlehem of Judea into the temple of God. And he commanded Uriel and brought John there during the night.^k And the four angels—Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael, in whom also God is present^l—came out and they brought^m the body of Zechariah. ²The Lord blew on him and he gave breath of life to him.ⁿ And rising, everyone^o was delighted with the service.

³And the Savior^p commanded and water came out from the endless spring^q in the Holy of Holies in the temple.^r There he baptized first John^s and forthwith in this way he baptized his father Zechariah. ⁴The angels shouted, “Amen!” And again they shouted,^t “Holy, holy, holy is God, who is seated on the throne of his glory! Because this decree and the heavenly water are

Apoc. Moses 40;
1 En. 9:1

a. A has “having fortified everything inside.”

b. A lacks “at the chasm.”

c. A has “a spring of living water leaping up as eternal life.”

d. A adds “for its own sake.”

e. A has “on the right a stock of bread” (cf. *DecapAB* 3:4).

f. A has only “And Elizabeth was nourished by them.”

g. A has “in the desert.”

h. A lacks “having uncovered nothing.”

i. A has “and when John was forty days,” but it is not clear if this is meant as a reference to his age or how long he had been in the desert.

j. A identifies the archangel as Gabriel.

k. For “into the temple of God . . . during the night,” M has only “into the temple of Judea during the night.” The longer reading is necessary to explain how Jesus arrives at the temple.

l. Both manuscripts are troublesome here. A reads (with some emendation), “and the four immeasurable powers—Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael, in whom perhaps the Lord was—came with them.” The constitution of the four archangels varies in Jewish and Christian sources, with Uriel often replaced with Sariel/Suriel or Phanuel. But these four appear in this precise order in *Apoc. Moses* where they are instructed to prepare Adam’s and Abel’s bodies for burial. In *1 Enoch* the four observe the chaos on earth that results from the activities of the Watchers. See further Berendts, *Studien über Zacharia-Apokryphen*, 91.

m. M lacks “they brought.”

n. A has “and the Lord blew on him to life.”

o. A lacks “everyone.”

p. A has “the Lord.”

q. A has “and a spring of water gushed out.”

r. A adds “of God.”

s. A has “the forerunner John.”

t. A lacks “and again the angels shouted.”

from the father of men.”^a And again they said, “Amen!”⁵ Then, the Lord commanded his angels and they took charge of the body of Zechariah and buried him in the temple of God below the altar.

John begins his ascetic diet

6 ¹From there, the Lord departed with Gabriel to Egypt, and John with Uriel to Elizabeth^b in the desert. And Mary was in Egypt, and Elizabeth was in the desert.^c This occurred in a portion of time in that night and these great things happened.^d

Decap. Bapt. 3:5; Birth Bapt. 4

²Immediately, John jumped up onto his feet and walked around. And when he was nine months old, the archangel said to Elizabeth, ³“Wean the child and no longer offer the breast but let his food be wild honey and locusts, which are on the top of the palm trees,^e because in^f the chasm palm trees grow abundantly.”

Matt 3:4//Mark 1:6

⁴At the time for John to eat, the tree bent, and after he was satisfied, the tree was straight again. ⁵And the wild honey (is) the spring of flowing water;^g it is called wild honey because out of a wild place flowed the sweetest (water).

Ps.-Mt. 20

Jesus and John return home

7 ¹When John became thirteen months old, the angel said to Elizabeth, “Rise and come out^h from here, for behold:ⁱ Herod is dead.” ²This (angel) appeared to Joseph in Egypt (telling him) to return from Egypt^j because Archelaus rules instead of his father Herod.^k Afraid, he fled to Galilee into the town of Nazareth.

Decap. Bapt. 4; Birth Bapt. 5

³And Elizabeth happened to be there and all the rest—Elizabeth and Mary and John and Jesus^l—in order that what was said by the prophet^m about the children who were killed by Herodⁿ would be fulfilled: ⁴“*Here am I and the children whom God has given me.*” And again: “*Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise.*” And again: “*Out of Egypt I have called my son.*” And in another: “*He will be called a Nazorean.*” And elsewhere: “*Galilee of the gentiles—the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light.*”

Matt 2:19–23

Heb 2:13 [Isa 8:18]
Matt 21:16 [Ps 8:2]
Matt 2:15 [Hos 11:1]
Matt 2:23
Matt 4:15–16 [Isa 9:1–2]

a. A has the erroneous “of voices.”

b. A lacks “to Elizabeth.”

c. A lacks this sentence.

d. A has “because in a moment of time in that night these great things happened.”

e. A is garbled here, reading, “which yet locusts of the palm tree.”

f. A has “above.”

g. M has “spring of baptism.”

h. A has only “come up.”

i. A has “because.”

j. A seems to be missing some portion of the sentence; it reads, “and likewise [. . .] also in Egypt to Joseph to find (or appear to) him,” and then continues with “and this happened after Elizabeth left the desert with the angel and the child, and Joseph left Egypt with Jesus.”

k. A reads closer to Matt 2:22 with “and hearing that Archelaus was ruling in Judea instead of his father.”

l. A has “the Lord.”

m. A lacks “by the prophet.”

n. A adds “because of the Lord.”

Decap. Bapt. 5:1

John receives his ascetic clothing

8 ¹And John, having been given over to the hand of the angel Uriel, at five years old he put around him his clothing of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist.^a ²He took no other tunic [nor] bag; nevertheless he had these things until his unfading end. ³For thus also it has been written about him: "*And his food was locusts and wild honey.*" ⁴And having grown up and come to an end together, Christ also had a tunic woven from the top and seamless.^b

Matt 3:4//Mark 1:6

John 19:23

Decap. Bapt. 5:2–6:6

John is imprisoned for rebuking Herod Antipas

9 ¹When John became twelve years old,^c Archelaus, having been tried, fled to a city of Galilee.^d And he ruled cunningly for nine years.^e ²Then he sent to him rulers and hegemon:^f Herod of Chalcis,^g Herod the king of Jerusalem (and) tetrarch,^h and Philip his brother.

³And Herod, becoming desirous of the wifeⁱ of his brother Philip, committed adultery with her. And having administered poison to Philip, he killed him and was married to her thereafter.^j ⁴But John stood his ground before Herod,^k saying to him, "*It is not lawful for you to have the wife of Philip, your brother!*"

Mark 6:17–18//Matt

14:3–4; Luke 31:9–20

⁵And Herod, having been rebuked by John, scourged him and put him in prison.

10 ¹After these things he released him^l and questioned him publicly, saying to him, "Why are you rebuking the king? Or do you not know that for the king, the law is unwritten?"^m

²But John said to him, "Are you troubled, O Herod, at being condemned by the truth?"ⁿ Or did you not know that great (and) mighty kings,^o exalting

a. A has "at five years old he first received clothing of camel's hair, because miserable marriages were put aside on account of it, and he was girded around the waist with a leather belt, because having put aside the cares of living, he was concerned about customs."

b. Vv. 3–5 in A read, "John took no other tunics (nor) a bag because the Lord also had a tunic woven from the top and seamless." This shorter reading is found also in Slav.

c. The chronology is problematic here. In 7:1 it is stated that John was thirteen months old at the beginning of Archelaus's reign. Perhaps the text intends here twelve years after the end of Archelaus's reign, making John's age here around twenty-two. In *DecapA*, John is thirty at this time (cf. below 11:6), in *DecapB* he is fifteen (5:1), and soon after he turns thirty-two (*DecapAB* 5:2).

d. The "trial" of Archelaus may be an allusion to Archelaus's appearance before Caesar, at which time he was confirmed as ethnarch of Judea (Josephus, *J. W.* 2.7.3 and *Ant.* 17.13.2). "Galilee" may be a corruption based on Archelaus's exile to Gallic Vienna. His reign indeed lasted nine years.

e. A merely says Archelaus was in Galilee for five years. Slav concludes here.

f. A has "Then he kept silent about the rulers of Herod of Chalketidos." Even M is problematic—why is Archelaus bringing these men to him in Galilee? The sense seems to be that these other rulers were appointed at this time, but neither verb ("sent/kept silent") is close to what is required.

g. This would be Herod IV, grandson of Herod the Great and ruler of Chalcis, a territory north of Judea, 41–48 CE.

h. This would be Herod Antipas, though Antipas was not "king of Jerusalem."

i. A has "Herodias, the wife."

j. Herod Antipas married Herodias ca. 27 CE (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.5.4).

k. A has "recited."

l. A adds "from the prison."

m. The sense here seems to be that the Levitical law on marriage does not apply to the king.

n. In A, "truth" is followed by the nomen sacrum for "Lord."

o. A reverses the two adjectives.

themselves by their own decrees, were utterly destroyed before the presence of the Lord?^a

³Herod commanded that he be bound.^b But with even more words, he denounced him, saying, “Because of these stocks^c I will be shown^d to be higher than you. But why are you troubled, Herod?^e For with Herodias you will be thrown into^f the underworld of Hades.”

Mark 6:17//Matt 14:3

⁴So Herod was distressed and wished to release him secretly.^g But Herodias did not agree, so he put him^h in prison again.ⁱ

Mark 6:19–20

The baptism of Jesus

11 ¹Jesus, knowing earlier about John’s suffering, went to him to be baptized by him.^j ²And John refused, saying < . . . >.^k

³Jesus said to him, “*Let it be so now;*^l *for it is proper in this way to fulfill all righteousness.*” And he received his ministry.

Matt 3:13–15

⁴John was baptized^m in the temple of God with his father Zechariah by Jesus,ⁿ about which^o Jesus further asked the Judeans, “*Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?*”^p They were unable to answer him a word but said,^q “We do not know.” ⁵For they were unable to show where^r the divine mysteries of God are performed in glory^s and in the service of the^t holy archangels and the genealogy^u in the thrice-holy voice.

Mark 11:30, 33 par.

⁶And they were both thirty years old.^v And the Lord was baptized by John.^w

Luke 3:23

a. A has only “will be utterly destroyed.”

b. A has “be placed on the stocks.”

c. A has “upon the stocks.”

d. A has the erroneous “will be pursued.”

e. A lacks this question.

f. A has “you will roam about.”

g. A lacks “secretly.”

h. A is corrupt here but reads, “. . . did not agree, a soldier who threw him.”

i. A lacks “again.”

j. A has “wishing to be baptized.”

k. M is deficient here. In Matthew, John says, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” A has “And John protested this.”

l. A lacks “Let it be so now.” M finishes Jesus’s words at “for it is proper in this”; the remaining material, present in Matthew, is taken from A.

m. A is corrupt here, reading, “the baptist alone.”

n. A lacks “by Jesus.”

o. If this reading is correct, the relative pronoun (in the feminine accusative) should agree with “baptism,” which is neuter.

p. M has only “Where did the baptism of John come from?”

q. A has “not knowing to answer, he (!) said to him.”

r. A has “how.”

s. A has “the mysteries created by God.”

t. A has “his.”

u. A lacks “the genealogy.”

v. John is thirty years old also when he begins his baptism ministry in *DecapA* 5:1 (*DecapB* 5:1 has the erroneous fifteen/five) and then thirty-two when arrested by Herod in *DecapAB* 5:2.

w. The entire verse in A is “And Jesus was thirty years old when he was baptized by John,” which reflects better the parallel in Luke.

Decap. Bapt. 7

The decapitation of John

12 ¹It happened at a certain time,^a when Herod was celebrating a birthday, his daughter Herodias danced. ²And she searched for her father Herod, so that whatever she asked for he would grant to her.^b And he vowed to obey her.^c ³She asked that she be given^d the head of John on a platter just as her^e mother told her to ask. She hastened, quite at ease.

⁴But Herod, deeply grieved, commanded to behead him^f and to place the head of John on a platter^g and bring (it) to Herod. And Herod gave (it) to his daughter and the daughter to her mother.^h ⁵Her mother handed it over to the dogs and the dogs bowing low handed itⁱ over to the disciples of John.

Mark 6:21–29//Matt
14:6–12

Decap. Bapt. 8

John is buried in the temple with Zechariah

13 ¹Then the archangel Uriel found^j Elizabeth and led her to the disciples of John and said to her, “Bury your son with his father.”^k

²She said, “Lord,^l I do not know^m the tomb of my husband Zechariah.”ⁿ ³Then the archangel, taking Elizabeth and the disciples of John and the body of John, departed with them to the temple of God^o and buried him beneath the altar near his father Zechariah. ⁴And a voice came to Elizabeth, saying that^p the blood of the righteous^q will be avenged^r at the hand of those who murdered them.

Decap. Bapt. 9

The deaths of the Herods

14 ¹It happened on a winter day,^s the daughter of Herod was playing near a frozen well,^t and slipping, she fell into it. And her trunk^u was caught and her entirety could not be seen because the ice caught her,^v but only her head stood

a. A lacks “at a certain time.”

b. This sentence is lacking in A.

c. A has “and his (!) father vowed to give her whatever she asked.”

d. A lacks “that she be given.”

e. A again has “his.”

f. A has “commanded it to be given.”

g. A has “and he sent a soldier (and) he beheaded him in the prison and preparing his head on a platter, he brought it to Herod” (cf. *DecapAB* 7:4).

h. A has “brought it to his (!) mother.”

i. A has “brought it.”

j. A has “taking.”

k. A adds “Zechariah.”

l. A lacks “Lord.”

m. M adds an erroneous negative, producing “I do not not know.”

n. A lacks “Zechariah.”

o. A lacks “of God.”

p. A begins “saying, ‘Courage, Elizabeth because.’

q. A has “the blood of them.”

r. The verb is middle, but likely the passive is intended, as is reflected in A’s perfect passive “has been avenged.”

s. For “on a winter day” (cf. *DecapAB* 9:1), A has “after these things.”

t. M lacks “frozen”; the emended reading here finds support in *DecapAB* 9:1; *Ep. Herod Pil.*; *Bk. Bee* 41; *Life Bapt. Serap.* 13:5; Nicephorus Callistus, *Hist. eccl.* 10.20; and *Chron. Pasc.* 350.

u. A has “entire trunk.”

v. A has “because of the ice around there.”

out. ²Those nearby and her household ran^a to tear her free by force.^b Her head was torn free but her body went out of sight into the well, and many who felt around did not find (it).^c

³Then, taking up her head, they carried (it) to Herod^d and Herod placed (it) on his lap with much sorrow.^e ⁴Seized by thirty-five demons, the demon-possessed son of Herod died from choking.^f ⁵And Herodias, mourning her household,^g became blind in her left eye. ⁶Herod, beset by dropsy and consumed by worms,^h departed human life. And the earth did not accept him, and the birds of the skyⁱ devoured him.

⁷His former^j wife, Procla,^k who was put away by Herodias, coming into the house, distributed all of her property^l to the poor so that they would come as suplicants^m for the bones of Herod so that the earth would take them.

⁸O righteous tomb, a home prepared for the holy ones.

O righteous water, avenger of unjust death and sharper than all iron.

Ep. Herod Pil.;
Solomon of Basra,
Bk. Bee 41; *Life Bapt.*
Serap. 13:5

Closing remarks

Decap. Bapt. 10

15 All these things I, Eurippios,ⁿ the disciple of holy John, the second of his disciples in strictness,^o wrote so that all the brothers listening (and) completing the remembrance of John the Baptist and his father Zechariah may find^p mercy in Jesus Christ our Lord.^q ²To whom be the glory and power now and always and forever and ever. Amen.^r

a. A has "those of her household ran."

b. A places "by force" after "torn free" in the following sentence.

c. A ends briefly with "and her trunk passed down." According to *Life Bapt. Serap.* a whale threw her body out of the lake (13:8). Jacob of Voragine adds a second tradition which states that she was swallowed by the earth (*Golden Legend* 125).

d. A has "they brought the head to Herod."

e. In *Ep. Herod Pil.* and *Chron. Pasc.* 350, the head is placed in the lap of Herodias.

f. A has only "the demon-possessed son of Herod, becoming mildewed, died." In *Ep. Herod Pil.* the son is named Lesbonax and is "overcome with a wasting illness." This is *Mart. Zech.*'s only mention of this mysterious son.

g. M has "son"; for household, cf. *Ep. Herod Pil.*

h. A has "and crooked." Consumption by worms is mentioned also in *Ep. Herod Pil.*; in *Life Bapt. Serap.* Herod "suffered a stroke in front of his dinner companions" (13:9).

i. A has "but the beasts of the earth and the birds of the sky."

j. A lacks "former."

k. Elsewhere (*Ep. Pil. Herod* and *Handing Over of Pilate* 10), Procla is the name of Pilate's wife. Antipas did have a previous wife, the daughter of Aretas IV of Nabatea, whom he divorced to marry Herodias.

l. A has "estate."

m. A adds "(to) God."

n. A has "Herpios."

o. M lacks "strictness" (cf. *DecapAB* 10:1).

p. M has "we may find."

q. A has "(so that) all the brothers and fellow disciples may glorify the love and mercy of God, the master."

r. A finishes with "because it is fitting to him, the all-holy Christ, forever and ever without end."