

# *January 7*

## *Synaxis of the Holy Glorious Prophet Forerunner and Baptizer John*

On the next day after the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the Holy Church glorifies the Forerunner and Baptist John (about him see Mt. 3:1-16; 11:1-19; 14:1-12; Mk. 1:2-8; 6:14-29; Lk. 1:5-25,39-80; 3:1-20; 7:18-35; 9:7-9; Jn. 1:19-34; 3:22-26), as such a man, who, having included in himself a line of holy prophets, foretold about the Savior of the world by the close image of preceding the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh and who was worthy to baptize the Lord in the Jordan. The Holy Church glorifies him, as «the angel, the apostle, the martyr, the prophet, the Chandler, the friend of Christ, the seal of the prophets, the mediator of the old and new grace, and in birth most honorable, and the voice of the Word of light». In the words of the Blessed Augustine, «he surpasses all, he has the advantage before all; everyone, who is born from a woman only, is lower than John». Related to the Lord through his mother, the son of the priest Zechariah and Elisabeth, the Forerunner of the Lord has anticipated birth of the Lord by six months. The Angel Gabriel foretold his birth to his father Zechariah in the temple. And here to the god-fearing couple, who up to advanced old age was deprived of the consolation of having children, is born the son of consolation, who was petitioned by their prayers, the foreteller of higher things who was filled «with the All Holy Spirit while yet in the womb» whom «his mother carries inside and who leaps for joy rejoicing in the beautiful fruit of the virgin» was announced. Saved, by God's mercy, from the death that overtook thousands of children in Bethlehem and its vicinity, St. John grew up in the wild and barren desert, preparing himself for great service by a strict way of life, by fasting, by prayers and the awesome reflection about the fate of the people of God. He remained as a desert dweller until that time when the Lord called him for the general preaching to the Judaic people. Obeying this calling, St. John, about 30 years old, appeared on the shores of the Jordan, as the enlightened «glory of the preexisting benefactor», «the greatest of all prophets» and «the truest preacher», who through his preaching prepared the people to accept the long awaited Savior, the Messiah, that by the strength of his service will present Him to the prepared people. As expressed in the church hymns, St. John was the morning light, "the star", which by its brightness surpassed the light of all the other stars and foretold the dawn of the thankful day, when Christ shines as the spiritual "Sun" (Mal. 4:2). Having baptized the sinless Lamb of

God among all those sinners who came to him, St. John finished his service as if this act sealed all of it. He died as a martyr. As a preacher of penance, he strictly and fearlessly disclosed the vices of the people, and all honored and respected him as a prophet. The King Herod married Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, who was still living. St. John «with conviction» accused the king "as the lawless one", and for it he was put in prison and then beheaded by the sword at the request of Herodias (see Aug. 29).

*Troparion, tone 2*

**The memory of the righteous is celebrated with hymns of praise,  
But the Lord's testimony is sufficient for you, Forerunner.  
You were shown indeed to be the most honorable of the prophets,  
For in the waters you baptize the One whom you preached.  
After suffering with joy on behalf of the truth,  
You proclaimed even to those in hell the God  
Who appeared in the flesh to take away the sin of the world, //  
And Who grants us great mercy.**

*(Text tr.: Holy Myrrh Bearing Women Monastery, modified)*

*Kontakion, tone 6*

**The River Jordan trembled, and was driven back  
Filled with fear at your coming in the flesh,  
While John drew back in awe  
As he fulfilled the ministry of the Spirit.  
The ranks of angels stood amazed,  
When they beheld you baptized in the stream,  
And we, who were in darkness, are filled with light, //  
Praising you, God made manifest, who enlightens all!**

*(Text tr.: Holy Myrrh Bearing Women Monastery)*

**Epistle:** Acts 19:1-8; sel. 42. **Gospel:** John 1:29-34; sel. 3.

**Entrance:** «Save us, O Son of God, who was baptized in the Jordan»..., **sing up to the Leavetaking of Theophany.**

**Refer to the chapter in the Rubrics (Ustav) and the Menaion: If the Synaxis of John the Forerunner falls on a Sunday.**

**See the Rubrics: if the Synaxis of the Forerunner falls on a Saturday**

**See the Rubrics for January 7: if the Afterfeast of Theophany falls on a Sunday.**

**Refer to the chapter in the Rubrics and the Menaion: If the Afterfeast of Theophany falls on a Sunday, and we sing 4 or 6 verses for the saint or there is a Polielely.**

*Saturday after Theophany:* **Epistle:** Eph. 6:10-17; sel. 233. **Gospel:** Mt. 4:1-11; sel. 7.

*Sunday after Theophany:* **Epistle:** Eph. 4:7-13; sel. 224. **Gospel:** Mt. 4:12-17; sel. 8.

**See under this date in the Rubrics(Ustav) about the so-called "otstupke(deviations)".**

*The translation of the right hand of John the Baptist from Antioch to Constantinople.*

The body of John of Baptist, after his beheading, was buried in the Samaritan city of Sebaste. St. Luke the Evangelist, passing through various cities and settlements preaching Christ, has come to Sebaste and was going home to Antioch, and wished to take the relics of the great prophet with him. But the inhabitants of Sebaste did not want to part with this precious treasure and gave St. Luke the right arm of John, which the evangelist brought to Antioch. In 959, when the Moslems took possession of Antioch, during the reign of the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Deacon Job transferred the hand of the Forerunner from Antioch to Chalcedon, from where it was transported on the eve of the Theophany of the Lord to Constantinople, where it was kept until the Turks took this city. At the present time, the right hand of John of Baptist is in the Church of the Icon of our Savior not Made by Hands in Winter Palace in St. Petersburg (see Oct 12).

The Turks beheaded **the New Martyr Athanasius of Attalia**, in 1700 in Constantinople for confessing the Christian faith and refusing to convert to Islam.

**The Memory of a miracle of John the Forerunner** on an Agarian man on Chios.

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900), pp. 19-20.  
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