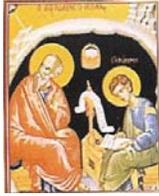


# September 26

## D. ☩ *Rest of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John, the Theologian*



St. John was born in Bethsaida, Galilee. He was a son of the fisherman Zebedee and Salome and the younger brother of the Holy Apostle James (Mt. 4:21, Mk. 15:40, 16:1). The family, into which St. John received his initial formation, belonged to the few truly pious Israelite families, filled with the living and inspired expectation of the appearance of the Messiah (Lk. 2:38).

At first John was the disciple of St. John the Baptist. The appearance of Jesus Christ, Whom the Holy Forerunner recognized as the Messiah, made an indelible impression on John and he together with Apostle Andrew followed Christ (Jn. 1:35-41). Subsequently (Mt. 4:21) he became one of the most trusted disciples of the Savior as the witness of the most important events of His life (Mt. 17:1; 26:37. Mk. 5:37) and especially as the beloved of all (Jn. 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20), and at the last supper he reclined *on the bosom* of his Teacher (Jn. 13:23). For his fiery zeal and strength of soul the Savior gave him and his brother the name *Boanerges*, Sons of Thunder (Mk. 3:17). In his love for Christ he was the one apostle not afraid to follow the Lord when He was led for judgment, and became the witness not only of His condemnation, but also of the very suffering on the cross. After the ascension of the Savior to heaven, St. John, together with the Apostles Peter and James, preached the word of God in Jerusalem and became a main leader of Christians, a pillar of the Church (Gal. 2: 9). He lived in Jerusalem up to the falling asleep of the Mother of God, entrusted to his care by Jesus Christ (Jn. 19:26-27), and for preaching Christ he more than once was exposed to persecution from the Sanhedrin and even endured scourging (Acts 3:4, 8:14, 25; Gal. 2:9).

After the falling asleep of the Mother of God, he moved to the city of Ephesus in Asia Minor where he cared not only for the Ephesians, but also on a broader scale for the Asia Minor churches, which sounds as the thunder "giving utterance to the hidden word of the wisdom of God with his tongue", dispersing "the darkness of polytheism", drying up "the muddy waters of impiety" and "refuting the words of the heretics".

During the reign of Dometian, St. John was sent to Rome in chains and there suffered for Christ. The holy elder was forced to drink poison, but it did not harm him. Then he was plunged into a cauldron with boiling oil, but also here the Lord protected him and all this left him even healthier and younger. Subsequently "for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" he was seized in Rome and banished to imprisonment on the island of Patmos (Rev. 1:9). There he converted

the inhabitants to Christ and received the great revelation about the future destiny of the Church and the world which is written in the "Apocalypse" (which means "Revelation").

Released from exile, he settled in Ephesus where he watched over the life of all the surrounding Churches and frequently traveled for personal oversight of them, protecting the purity of the Christian teaching from the intrusion of various heretical ideas. As far as possible St. John defined for his spiritual children the dangerous dialogue among the heretics and worried about protecting the truly faithful from false teachers. For example, once in Ephesus he went to the bath and seeing the heretic Cerinthus there, ran out, saying: "let us get out of here, when Cerinthus, the enemy of truth, is in the bath, any one of us can fall."

High Christian love was the main, distinctive feature of the life and teachings of St. John and he appropriately is called the apostle of love. Neither old age nor physical weakness could weaken his fervent zealousness for apostolic service and burning love for God and neighbor <sup>1</sup>). For him there was no greater joy than to hear that his spiritual children walk in truth (3 Jn. 1:4).

Up to the last days of his life he gathered disciples around him, constantly inspiring them to keep peace among themselves and to love each other. With the passage of time he already became so weak that he could not go to Christian gatherings by himself, and his disciples carried him there. He already could not teach as he did earlier, and his talks at the gatherings were limited to the words: "children, love each other". The disciples, constantly hearing the same thing from him, finally, asked him why he constantly repeats the same thing to them, and the Holy Apostle answered: "this is the commandment of the Lord and if you observe it, then that is enough". And in his epistles the holy apostle teaches: "that he who loves God must love his brother also, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer. As Christ has laid down His life for us, so we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. He who loves his brother abides in the light, but he who hates his brother is in darkness" (1 Jn. 4:20-21; 3:5-16; 2:10-11).

The holy elder ended his life in the first years of the second century after the birth of Christ at the age of 94 years (see May 8). Besides the Apocalypse, Ap. John wrote a Gospel and three general Epistles. After the profound teaching of the preeternal existence of God the Word, St. John acquired the name of "Theologian". The Holy Church blesses him as "Virgin", "true friend and confidant of Christ the Teacher", "master of theology", "transcriber of Orthodox teachings".

**Troparion and Kontakion** see May 8.

**Paramoia, Gospel** for Matins and the liturgy see May 8. **Epistle:** 1 Jn. 4:12-19; sel. 73.

**Refer to the Typicon (Ustav) for September 26 on when to do the anointing with oil in the vigil on great feasts.**

### *Holy Righteous Gideon, Judge of the Israelites*

He was born in the clan of Manasseh, and was judge after Deborah the prophetess. He saved the Israelites from the attacks of the Midianites and then ruled the Israelites for 40 years. He died in the year 1307 before Christ. For detailed information on his life refer to the book of Judges.

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1). The tradition about the touching and tender example of fatherly love of the holy apostle for his neighbors and his ardent zealousness for their salvation was preserved. Once when he was in a certain city near Ephesus to preach the Gospel and establish the faithful, the holy apostle saw a youth who obviously had spiritual gifts in a healthy and comely body. Wishing this youth to be a useful member of the Church, St. John received him and taught him the Christian faith and piety. But, he, distracted by other very important activities and leaving the city, entrusted him to the bishop of the city. The bishop nurtured the youth as his son, protected him from all seductions and temptations, and gave him the milk of pure teachings of the faith to drink and Christian piety. Finally, continually seeing his good and gentle behavior and hoping to establish him even more firmly in piety, he found him worthy of holy baptism, but that completely weakened his supervision over him, as he already was fully a Christian. Having remained free, the youth reduced his contacts with contemporaries and was not trained to fear God and turned to vices. Dangerous friends soon enured him to various depraved amusements, intemperance and dissoluteness. Not having the means for satisfying his strengthening passion for sensual pleasures from day to day, he little by little got used to cheating and thievery. Finally, no longer finding an opportunity to hide his dissolute habits and by their presence placing a burden on pious society with whom he should have involuntarily participated in ascetic efforts of piety, he gathered some dissolute comrades and went with them into the mountains, became the head of their predatory gang, and, spilling human blood, never thinking that it satisfied the passions in anything.

After a rather long time St. John came again to this city, and, having learned about the dissolute life of the youth, he immediately mounted a horse, took a guide with him and went to the mountains to search for his prodigal sheep. The guards of the robber gang in ambush seized the holy apostle and led him to their chief who, hardly catching sight of the captive St. John, rushed to run away from him. Then the holy elder, forgetting his old age and weakness, with the swiftness of a young man pursued the fugitive, shouting after him: "my son, why are you running away from me, your father? Why do you trouble me in vain? Stop, have mercy on me, a weak and infirm elder; stop, be not afraid, you still have hope of salvation. I shall be responsible before God for you; I will lay down my soul for you as Christ laid down His soul for us. Be not afraid, my son, stop, be not afraid. Christ sent me to bestow the absolution of sins on you. I shall suffer affliction for you, let the blood which you have spilled be on me, let the burden of your sins weigh on my neck!" Touched with the tears and the words of the Holy Apostle, the robber stopped, threw his armor down with scorn, appeared before the holy elder in fear and

trembling, pouring out tears and from shame hiding his right hand empurpled with blood. What does St. John do? He falls down before the feet of the villain, he kisses his bleeding hand, begs him to have mercy on his soul, to come back to the bosom of the Holy Church to the Most merciful Lord Jesus Christ. In such a way, a perished sheep returned to the elected flock of the Heavenly Shepherd. The Apostle full of love is himself divided with repenting with strict ascetic efforts of church repentance: fasting and prayer, vigils and prostrations, and did not leave him until he completely healed his sinful wounds, however long it took to completely confirm him in the right way of piety.

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 0353-0355  
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