

SUNDAY, AUGUST 29, 2020
BEHEADING OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

August 29

The Beheading of St John the Baptist.

Herod Antipas, son of the Herod who slew the young children in Bethlehem at the time of the birth of the Lord Jesus, was ruler of Galilee when John the Baptist was preaching. This Herod was married to the daughter of Aretas, an Arabian prince. But Herod, an evil branch of evil stock, put away his lawful wife and took Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, to live with him while Philip was still alive. John the Baptist stood up against this lawlessness and strongly denounced Herod, at which Herod threw him into prison. At the time of some feast at his court in Sebastia in Galilee, Salome, the daughter of Herodias and Philip, danced for the guests. Herod, in his cups and carried away by her dancing, promised her whatever she asked, even to the half of his kingdom. Instructed by her mother, she asked for the head of John the Baptist. Herod commanded that John be beheaded in the prison and his head brought on a platter. John's disciples took the body of their teacher by night and buried it, but Herod tore out John's tongue with a needle and then buried his head in an unclean place. What later happened to John's head is recorded and can be read under February 24th.

God's punishment was quickly visited upon this group of evildoers. Prince Aretas, to avenge his daughter's honour, attacked Herod with his army and brought him to his knees. The defeated Herod was condemned by the Roman Caesar, Caligula, to exile first in Gaul and then in Spain. As exiles, Herod and Herodias lived in need and debasement until the earth opened and swallowed them up. Salome, Herodias's daughter, came to a bad end in the river Sikaris (Sula).

The death of John took place before the Passover, but its commemoration on August 29th was instituted because it was on this day that a church, that had been built over his grave in Sebastia by the Emperor Constantine and the Empress Helena, was consecrated. In this church were also placed the relics of John's disciples, Eliseus and Audius.

GREAT VESPERS

LORD I CALL, Forerunner, tone 6:

During the celebration of shameless Herod's birthday,
the terms of the oath to the wanton dancer were fulfilled,
for the Baptist's head was cut off and carried like food on a platter
and offered to those reclining at the loathsome banquet.

Truly they feasted on wickedness and murder.
But let us bless the Forerunner, as is his due,//
and honor him as the greatest born of women!

The dance of the devil's disciple
was rewarded with your head, O Forerunner.
Oh, banquet of blood!
Would that you had never sworn, deceitful Herod!
Better for you to lie, than shed righteous blood!

But let us bless the Baptist, as is his due,//
and honor him as the greatest born of women!

In demonic love and fiery passion, O Herod,
you condemned him who reproved your adultery.
For the sake of an oath to a dancing girl,
you delivered his holy head to that Jezebel.
Woe to you! How did you dare such murder?
Why was the wanton dancer not consumed by fire?
But let us bless the Baptist, as is his due,//
and honor him as the greatest born of women!

Again Herodias raves with raging lust.
Oh, dance of deceit and feast of murder!
The Baptist is beheaded, and Herod is troubled.//
Through the prayers of Your Forerunner, O Lord, grant peace to our souls!

GLORY... for the Forerunner, tone 6:

During the celebration of shameless Herod's birthday,
the terms of the oath to the wanton dancer were fulfilled,
for the Baptist's head was cut off and carried like food on a platter
and offered to those reclining at the loathsome banquet.
Truly they feasted on wickedness and murder.
But let us bless the Forerunner, as is his due,//
and honor him as the greatest born of women!

NOW AND EVER... (Dogmatikon of the Resurrection in tone 2):

The shadow of the Law passed when grace came;
as the Bush burned, yet was not consumed,
so the Virgin gave birth, yet remained a Virgin.
The Righteous Sun has risen instead of a pillar of flame.//
Instead of Moses, Christ, the Salvation of our souls.

THREE OLD TESTAMENT READINGS

The Reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

Thus says the Lord: “Comfort, comfort My people,” Says God. “Speak to the heart of Jerusalem, you Priests, comfort her, for her humiliation is increased, her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the Lord’s hand double for her sins. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight the paths of our God.’

“Go up to a high mountain, you who are proclaiming glad tidings to Zion, lift up your voice with strength, O herald of good tidings to Jerusalem. Lift it up, fear not! I the Lord God, I have heard the poor of Israel and will not forsake them. I will open rivers on the mountains, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the deserts pools of water, and the thirsty land springs of water. Let the heavens rejoice from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth bring forth, and let it sprout forth mercy and cause

righteousness to shine fourth also. “Declare this with a shout of joy, and let this be known, proclaim it to the end of the earth. Say, “The Lord hath redeemed His servant Jacob!’ And if they thirst, he shall lead them through the desert, He shall bring forth water for them out of the rock. Rejoice, O barren one who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in travail! For more are the children of the desolate one than of her who has a husband.” Composite 8 (Isaiah 40:1-5;41:17-18; 45:8; 48:20-21; 54:1)

THE READING FROM THE PROPHECY OF MALACHI

Thus says the Lord Almighty: “Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before thee, and the Lord whom you seek shall come into His temple. But who can endure the day of His coming? For he is coming like the fire of a furnace and like the fuller’s herb; and he shall cleanse, refining and purifying, as it were, silver and gold. And he comes to you with judgment, and will be a swift witness against the evil ones and against adulterers, and against those who swear falsely by My name, against those who withhold the hireling’s wages, against those who oppress widows and beat orphans, against those who avoid judgment in favor of strangers, and against those who do not fear him,” says the Lord Almighty.

“For I am the Lord your God, and I change not; and you, the sons of Jacob, have turned aside from the Law and have not kept it. Return to Me, therefore, and I will return to you,” says the Lord Almighty. “And all nations shall call you blessed, and they shall understand that I am the Lord, who distinguishes between the righteous and between the transgressors on that day, in which I shall act to spare those who love Me.

“Know, therefore, and remember the Law of Moses, My servant, as I commanded you at Horeb, the statutes and ordinances for all Israel. And behold, I will send to you Elijah the Tishbite before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes, who shall turn the heart of a father to his son, and the heart of a man to his neighbor, lest I come quickly and smite the earth,” says the Lord Almighty, God, the Holy One of Israel. **Composite 9** (*Malachi 3:1-3, 5-7, 12, 18; 4:4-6*)

The Reading from the Wisdom of Solomon

The righteous man, though he die early, will be at rest. The righteous man who has died will judge the ungodly who are living. For they will see the end of the righteous, and will not understand what was said about him; for the Lord will cast down the ungodly speechless to the ground and shake them from the foundations; they shall become desolate to the end; they will be in sorrows, and their memory will perish. For they will come with fear at the thought of their sins, and their iniquities shall stand against them to convict them.

Then the righteous man will stand with great boldness before those who have afflicted him, and those who have made of no account his labors. Having seen it, they shall be troubled with much fear and they will be amazed at his most-glorious salvation. They will say within themselves in repentance, in anguish of spirit they will groan and say: “This was he whom we had sometimes in derision and a proverb of reproach – we fools! We accounted his life as madness, and his end to be without honor. How is he numbered among the sons of God? And why is his lot among the Saints?

“Therefore, we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness did not illumine us, nor did the sun shine on us. We took our fill of the paths of lawlessness and destruction, and we walked impassible pathways, but the way of the Lord we have not known.” Composite 3 (Wisdom of Solomon 4:7, 16, 17, 19-20; 5:1-7)

APOSTIKHA: Forerunner, tone 2:

O Baptist John, preacher of repentance,
when your head was cut off, you sanctified the earth;
for you made clear God’s Law to the faithful
destroying lawlessness.
As you stand before the throne of the heavenly King,//
entreat Him to have mercy on our souls!

v. The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. (Ps 91/92:12)

O most holy John,
you were beheaded for the sake of the Law of the Lord.
Filled with boldness of speech,
you rebuked the evil king for his transgression of the Law.
The host of Angels marvel at your strength;
the choir of Apostles and Martyrs praise you.
We also celebrate your yearly commemoration,//
glorifying the Holy Trinity Who crowned you, O most blessed Forerunner.

v. The righteous shall rejoice in the Lord and shall hope in Him! (Ps 63/64:10)

The Prophet from among the Prophets,
and greater than all the Prophets,
sanctified from his mother’s womb to the Lord’s service,
today has been beheaded by a lawless king;
and openly rebuking the woman who danced immodestly,
both before and after his beheading,
he put shame upon that sinful gathering.
Thus, we cry out: “O Baptist John,//
as you have boldness to speak, intercede on behalf of our souls!”

GLORY... Forerunner, tone 8:

O Forerunner of the Savior,
you rebuked kings so that they would not work iniquity;
but the frolicking of a lawless woman persuaded Herod to cut off your head.
Therefore we bless your name from the rising to the setting of the sun.
Since you stand with boldness before the Lord,//
earnestly entreat Him to save our souls!

NOW AND EVER... Resurrectional Theotokion in tone 8:

O unwedded Virgin,
who ineffably conceived God in the flesh,
O Mother of God most high,
accept the cries of your servants, O blameless One!
Grant cleansing of transgressions to all!//
Receive our prayers and pray to save our souls!

TROPARIA

Forerunner, tone 2:

The memory of the righteous is celebrated with hymns of praise,
but the Lord's testimony is sufficient for you, O Forerunner.
You were shown in truth to be the most honorable of the Prophets,
for you were deemed worthy to baptize in the steams of the Jordan Him Whom they foretold.
Therefore, having suffered for the truth with joy,
you proclaimed to those in hell God Who appeared in the flesh,
Who takes away the sin of the world//
and grants us great mercy.

Resurrectional Dismissal Theotokion, tone 2:

All beyond thought, all most glorious,
are your mysteries, O Theotokos.
Sealed in purity, preserved in virginity,
you were revealed to be the true Mother who gave birth to the True God.//
Entreat Him to save our souls.

DIVINE LITURGY

TROPARION

Forerunner, tone 2

The memory of the righteous is celebrated with hymns of praise.
But the Lord's testimony is sufficient for you, O Forerunner.
You were shown in truth to be the most honorable of the prophets,
for you were deemed worthy to baptize in the streams of the Jordan Him whom they foretold.
Therefore, having suffered for the truth with joy,
you proclaimed to those in hell God who appeared in the flesh,
who takes away the sin of the world, and grants us great mercy.

KONTAKIA

Forerunner, tone 5

The glorious beheading of the Forerunner
Became an act of divine dispensation,
For he preached to those in hell the coming of the Savior.

Let Herodias lament, for she entreated lawless murder,
Loving not the law of God, nor eternal life,
But that which is false and temporal.

Steadfast Protectress...

Steadfast protectress of Christians,
constant advocate before the creator:
do not despise the cry of us sinners,
but in your goodness come speedily to help us who call on you in faith.
Hasten to hear our petition and to intercede for us, O Theotokos,
for you always protect those who honor you.

PROKEIMENON, tone 7: The righteous shall rejoice in the Lord / and shall hope in Him.
Vs. Hear my voice, O God, when I pray unto Thee; preserve my life from dread of the enemy.

EPISTLE: (33) Acts 13:25-32 In those days, as John was finishing his course, he said, ‘Whom do you think I am? I am not He. But behold, there comes One after me, the shoes of Whose feet I am not worthy to loose.’ Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent. For those who dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him. And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death. And when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead. And He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings – that the promise which was made to the fathers, God has fulfilled for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus.

Alleluia in the fourth tone: The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree and shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

Vs. They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.

GOSPEL: (24) Mark 6:14-30 At that time, King Herod heard of Him, for His name had become well known. And he said, “John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.” Others said, “It is Elijah.” And others said, “It is the Prophet, or like one of the prophets.” But when Herod heard, he said, “This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!” For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife; for he had married her. Because John had said to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him, but she could not; for Herod feared John knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief men of Galilee. And when Herodias’ daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and

those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, "Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you." He also swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom." So she went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist!" Immediately she came in with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." And the king was exceedingly sorry; yet, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard of it, they came and took away his corpse and laid it in a tomb. Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.

COMMUNION HYMNS: The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not fear evil tidings. Alleluia...