



GREATMARTYR, VICTORY-BEARER, AND WONDERWORKER GEORGE

The Great Martyr George was the son of wealthy and pious parents, who raised him in the Christian faith. He was born in the city of Beirut (in antiquity - Berytos), at the foot of the Lebanese mountains.

Having entered military service, the Great-martyr George stood out among the other soldiers by virtue of his mind, valor, physical strength, military bearing and beauty. Having quickly attained the rank of millenary [tribunus millenarius, an officer in the Roman army in charge of a thousand or more soldiers], St. George became a favorite of the Emperor Diocletian.

Diocletian was a talented ruler, but a fanatical adherent of the Roman gods. Having set for himself the goal of reviving dying paganism in the Roman Empire, he went down in history as one of the most cruel persecutors of Christians.

Once, when he heard in a court the inhuman sentence concerning the annihilation of Christians, St. George became inflamed with compassion for them. Foreseeing that sufferings were also awaiting him, George distributed his property to the poor, freed his slaves, appeared before Diocletian and, having Victory-bear revealed himself as a Christian, denounced him for cruelty and injustice. George's speech was full of powerful and convincing objections against the imperial order to persecute Christians.

After futile persuasions to deny Christ, the Emperor ordered that the saint be subjected to various tortures. St. George was confined in a dungeon, where they placed him supine on the ground; his legs they confined in stocks, and on his breast they placed a heavy stone. But St.

George manfully endured the sufferings and glorified the Lord. Then George's torturers began to refine their cruelty. They beat the saint with ox-hide whips, subjected him to the wheel, threw him into quicklime and forced him to run in shoes with sharp nails inside. The holy Martyr endured everything patiently. Finally, the Emperor ordered the saint's head to be cut off. Thus, the holy sufferer departed unto Christ in Nicomedia in 303 A.D.

The Great-martyr George, for his valour and his spiritual victory over his torturers, who could not force him to renounce Christianity, and likewise for his wonderworking assistance to people in danger, is additionally called the "Victory-bearer." The relics of St. George the Victory-bearer were placed in the Palestinian city of Lydda, in the church that bears his name, while his head was preserved in Rome, in the church that is also dedicated to him.

On icons, the Great-martyr George is depicted sitting on a white horse and smiting a dragon with a spear. This depiction is based on tradition and relates to the posthumous miracles of the holy Great-martyr George. It is said that not far from the place where St. George was born, in the city of Beirut, there lived a dragon in a lake who frequently devoured people of that locale. What kind of beast it was, a python, crocodile or large lizard is not known.

In order to appease the wrath of that dragon, the superstitious inhabitants of that locale began regularly by lot to give a youth or maiden up to it to be eaten. Once the lot fell on the daughter of the ruler of that locale. They took her to the shore of the lake and tied her up where she began to await in terror the appearance of the dragon.

When the beast began to approach her, suddenly a radiant youth appeared on a white horse who smote the dragon with a spear and saved the maiden. This youth was the Great-martyr St. George. By such a miraculous appearance he caused the extermination of youths and maidens to cease in the environs of Beirut and converted to Christ the pagan inhabitants of that country.

The Great Martyr George is a protector of the army. The depiction of George the Victory-bearer on a horse symbolizes victory over the devil [the ancient serpent]: "...*behold a great fiery red dragon with seven heads and seven diadems on his heads...he laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the devil and satan and bound him for a thousand years...*" (Rev. 12:3, 20:2).

Countless miracles that have been performed at his grave; he has also appeared in dreams to those who, thinking on him, have sought his help, from thence until the present day. Consumed by love for Christ, it was not difficult for St. George to leave all for this love - his status, wealth and imperial favor, his friends and the whole world. For this love, the Lord rewarded him with a wreath of unfading glory in heaven and on earth, and with eternal life in His Kingdom. The Lord further endowed him with the power to help in need and distress all who honor him and call on his name.

