

## St. John Chrysostom: john homilies romans 9

St. John Chrysostom: John Homilies Romans 9 11 Homily II. Acts I. 6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at t restore again the kingdom to Israel? When the disciples intend to ask anything, they approach Him together, t dint of numbers they may abash Him into compliance. They well knew that in what He had said previously, Of knoweth no man (Matt. xxiv. 36), He had merely declined telling them: therefore they again drew near, and pu question. They would not have put it had they been truly satisfied with that answer. For having heard that they about to receive the Holy Ghost, they, as being now worthy of instruction, desired to learn. Also they were quite for freedom: for they had no mind to address themselves to danger; what they wished was to breathe freely ag they were no light matters that had happened to them, but the utmost peril had impended over them. And witho any thing to Him of the Holy Ghost, they put this question: Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? They did not ask, when? but whether at this time. So eager were they for that day. Indeed, to me it ap that they had not any clear notion of the nature of that kingdom; for the Spirit had not yet instructed them.<sup>3030</sup> emphatic position of as well as the answer of Jesus shows that the disciples earnest hope and expectation were that their Lord should, during their life-time, personally organize a kingdom on the basis of the Jewish theocracy. Chrys. is explicit in pointing out their incorrect conception of the kingdom of Christ, but does here explain the specifically Jewish character of that conception. In the early disciples we behold the constant struggle of the Christian spirit to break away from the forms of Jewish nationalism.G.B.S. And they do not say shall these things be? but they approach Him with greater honour, saying, Wilt Thou at this time restore again kingdom, as being now already fallen. For there they were still affected towards sensible objects, seeing they yet become better than those who were before them; here they have henceforth high conceptions concerning C then their minds are elevated, He also speaks to them in a higher strain. For He no longer tells them, Of that d even the Son of Man knoweth (Mark xiii. 32); but He says, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons w Father hath put in His own power (Acts i. 7.) Ye ask things greater than your capacity, He would say. And yet e they learned things that were much greater than this. And that you may see that this is strictly the case, look ho things I shall enumerate. What, I pray you, was greater than their having learned what they did learn? Thus, th learned that there is a Son of God, and that God has a Son equal with Himself in dignity (John v. 1720); they l that there will be a resurrection (Matt. xvii. 9); that when He ascended He sat on the right hand of God (Luke xx 69); and what is still more

stupendous, that Flesh is seated in heaven, and adored by Angels, and that He will c again (Mark xvi. 19); they learned what is to take place in the judgment (Matt. xvi. 27); learned that they shall sit and judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke xxi. 27); learned that the Jews would be cast out, and in their stead the Gentiles should come in (Matt. xix. 28). For, tell me, which is greater? to learn that a person will reign, or to learn the time when? (Luke xxi. 24). Paul learned things which it is not lawful for a man to utter (2 Cor. xii. 4); things that were before the world was made, he learned them all. Which is the more difficult, the beginning or t Clearly to learn the beginning. This, Moses learned, and the time when, and how long ago: and he enumerates And<sup>3131</sup> Cod. C. omits this sentence here, and inserts it below (p. 12), where it is evidently out of place. The p referred to seems to be Ecclus. 51, 8. the wise Solomon saith, I will make mention of things from the beginning world. And that the time is at hand, they do know: as Paul saith, The Lord is at hand, be careful for nothing. ( i. 5). These things they knew not [then], and yet He mentions many signs (Matt. ch. xxiv). But, as He has just Not many days hence, wishing them to be vigilant, and did not openly declare the precise moment, so is it he However, it is not about the general Consummation that they now ask Him, but, Wilt Thou at this time, say the restore the kingdom to Israel? And not even this did He reveal <sup>12</sup>to them. They also asked this [about the end world] before: and as on that occasion He answered by leading them away from thinking that their deliverance and, on the contrary, cast them into the midst of perils, so likewise on this occasion but more mildly. For, that th may not imagine themselves to be wronged, and these things to be mere pretences, hear what He says: He im them that at which they rejoiced: for He adds: But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come up and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost the earth. (Acts i. 8.) Then, that they may make no more enquiries, straightway He was received up. Thus, jus the former occasion He had darkened their minds by awe, and by saying, I know not; here also He does so by up. For great was their eagerness on the subject, and they would not have desisted; and yet it was very neces they should not learn this. For tell me,<sup>3232</sup> The connection must be supplied: e. g. It was not that this point of knowledge was too high for them; for, as has been shown, they knew already, or were soon to know, things mu than this, and which their hearers would find much harder to believe. For tell me, etc. which do the Gentiles mo disbelieve? that there will be a consummation of the world, or that God is become man, and issued from the Vi Here C. has the sentence: Also the wise Solomon saith, etc. p. ii, note 1. But I am ashamed of dwelling on thi as if it were about some difficult matter. Then again, that the disciples might not say, Why dost thou leave the m in suspense? He adds, Which the Father hath put in His own power. And yet He declared the Fathers power one: as in the saying, For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth will. (John v. 21.) If where need is to work, Thou

actest with the same power as the Father; where it behooves dost Thou not know with the same power? Yet certainly to raise up the dead is much greater than to learn the d greater be with power, much more the other. But just as when we see a child crying, and pertinaciously wishing something from us that is not expedient for him, we hide the thing, and show him our empty hands, and say, S it not: the like has Christ here done with the Apostles. But as the child, even when we show<sup>3434</sup> , C. the modern text has . him [our empty hands], persists with his crying, conscious he has been deceived, an leave him, and depart, saying, Such an one calls me: and we give him something else instead, in order to div from his desire, telling him it is a much finer thing than the other, and then hasten away; in like manner Christ acted.<sup>3535</sup> These illustrations, which seem to admit a half deceptive element in our Lords conversations, are justified by the passage in hand as by the character of Jesus. What Jesus promises, viz.: the Holy Spirit, is not promised in order to divert the disciples from their desire, but to assure to them a greater blessing than they t knew how to anticipate. The disciples wish a temporal kingdom with personal prerogatives; Jesus promises the of Truth and opens before them the life of spiritual growth and usefulness. The illustration would have been mo appropriate, had Chrys. said: The child persists in his crying, but Jesus quiets him by giving him something far than he had asked.G.B.S. The disciples asked to have something, and He said He had it not. And on the first he frightened them. Then again they asked to have it now: He said He had it not; and He did not frighten them after having shown<sup>3636</sup> (as above, , sc. ), , sc. . The mss. except C and A, and the Edd. have before , which gives no sense. [the empty hands], He done this, and gives them a plausible reason:<sup>3737</sup> Chrys. therefore explains these sayings of our Lord (polemi against the Arians) as : i. e. the thing said is not objectively true, but the morality of all actions depends on the subjective condition of the or purpose ( , de Sacerdot. 1. 8.), so that where this is right and good, a deception is lawful. This lax view of the morality of Truth was very general in the Greek Church: not so in the early Latin Church. See the two Treatises of St. Augustine Mendacio (Lib. of Fathers, Seventeen Short Treatises of St. Aug.) The stricter doctrine however is maintained Basil, who in his shorter Monastic Rule peremptorily condemns all , and pious fraud (officiosium mendaci every description, on. the ground that all falsehood is from Satan, John v. 44. and that our Lord has made no distinction between one sort of lying and another. Again, the monk Johannes of Lycopolis in Egypt: All falseho foreign from Christ and Christian men, be it in a small or in a great matter: yea, though a good end be served b is never to be allowed, for the Saviour hath declared, that all lying is from the Wicked One. Pallad, Hist. Lausia Bibl. Patr. t. xiii. p. 965. Which the Father, He says, hath put in his own power. What? Thou not know the thi the Father! Thou knowest Him, and not what belongs to Him! And yet Thou hast said, None knoweth the Fathe (Luke x. 25); and, The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God (1 Cor. ii. 10); and Thou not kno this! But they feared to ask

Him again, lest they should hear Him say, Are ye also without understanding? (Ma 26.) For they feared Him now much more than before. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you. As in the former instance He had not answered their question (for it is the part of a teacher to teach not what the disciple chooses, but what is expedient for him to learn), so in this, He tells them beforehand, for this reason what they ought to know, that they may not be troubled. In truth, they were yet weak. But to inspire them with confidence, He raised up their souls, and concealed what was grievous. 13 Since he was about to leave them v therefore in this discourse He says nothing painful. But how? He extols as great the things which would be pain but saying, Fear not: for ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria. For since he had said, Go not into the the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not (Matt. x. 5), what there He left unsaid, He here adds And to the uttermost part of the earth; and having spoken this, which was more fearful than all the rest, then that they may not again question Him, He held His peace. And having this said, while they beheld, He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight (v. 9). Seest thou that they did preach and fulfil the Gospel? For great was a gift He had bestowed on them. In the very place, He says, where ye are afraid, that is, in Jerusalem, there first, and afterwards unto the uttermost part of the earth. Then for assurance of what He had said, While they beheld He was taken up. Not while they beheld did He rise from the dead, but while they beheld, He was taken up. however, as the sight of their eyes even here was not all-sufficient; for in the Resurrection they saw the end, but the beginning, and in the Ascension they saw the beginning, but not the end: because in the former it had been superfluous to have seen the beginning, the Lord Himself Who spake these things being present, and they saw clearly that He is not there; but in the latter, they needed to be informed of the sequel by word of others: inasmuch then as their eyes do not suffice to show them the height above, nor to inform them whether He is actually gone to heaven, or only seemingly into heaven, see then what follows. That it was Jesus Himself they knew from the fact that He had been conversing with them (for had they seen only from a distance, they could not have recognized Him but; i. e. had they but seen the Ascension from a distance, and not been conversing with the Lord at the moment of His Assumption. Cod. E. transposes the clause to the end of the sentence; meaning could not by mere sight have been cognizant of the fact of His ascension into heaven. but that He is taken up in Heaven the Angels themselves inform them. Observe how it is ordered, that not all is done by the Spirit, but they also do their part. But why did a cloud receive Him? This too was a sure sign that He went up to Heaven. Not in the case of Elijah, nor in a fiery chariot, but a cloud received Him; which was a symbol of Heaven, as the Prophet says; 3939 Ps. civ. 3. : Who maketh on a cloud His stepping, or, going. Who maketh the clouds His chariot (Ps. civ. 3); it is of the Father Himself that this is said. Therefore he says, on a cloud; in the

symbol, he would say, of the Divine power, for no other Power is seen to appear on a cloud. For hear again another Prophet says: The Lord sitteth upon a light cloud (Is. xix. 1). For<sup>4040</sup> At first sight it looks as if this sentence were out of place here. But the connection may be thus explained: this circumstance, of the cloud, is but very significant; and the minds of the disciples were alive to its import, as betokening His Godhead. True, it may not also be said of Moses on the mount Sinai, that a cloud received him out of their sight? For Moses entered darkness, Exod. xx. 21. But the cloud there was because of Him, where God was, not because of Moses. it was they were listening with great attention to what He was saying, and this in answer to a very interesting question with their minds fully aroused and quite awake, that this thing took place. Also on the mount [Sinai] the cloud was because of Him: since Moses also entered into the darkness, but the cloud there was not because of Moses. A merely say, I go, lest they should again grieve, but He said, I send the Spirit (John xvi. 5, 7); and that He was going away into heaven they saw with their eyes. O what a sight they were granted! And while they looked straight it is said, toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven they u expression This demonstratively, saying, this Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall thus demonstratively, in this way come in like manner as ye have seen Him going into heaven. (v. 10, 11.) At the outward appearance is cheering [in white apparel]. They were Angels, in the form of men. And they say, Galilee: they showed themselves to be trusted by the disciples, by saying, Ye men of Galilee. For this was the meaning: else, what needed they to be told of their country, who knew it well enough? By their appearance also attracted their regard, and shewed that they were from heaven. But wherefore does not Christ Himself tell them things, instead of the Angels? He had beforehand told them all things; [What if ye shall see the Son of Man] go where He was before? (John vi. 62). Moreover the Angels did not say, whom you have seen taken up, but, going heaven: ascension is the word, not assumption; <sup>14</sup>the expression taken up,<sup>4141</sup> i. e. the Angels had before u phrase of assumption: but this does not express the whole matter; therefore, to show that it is the act of His own Divine power, they now say, going and afterwards express it that He will come, not that He will be sent. He ascended, by His own Divine power. So again it is said, A cloud received Him: but in this He was not passing God He stepped upon the cloud: alluding to the expression in the Psalm above cited, . belongs to the flesh. For the same reason they say, He which is taken up from you shall thus come, not, shall be sent shall come. He that ascended, the same is he also that descended (Eph. iv. 10). So again the expression, a cloud received Him: for He Himself mounted upon the cloud. Of the expressions, some are adapted to the conception of the disciples, some agreeable with the Divine Majesty. Now, as they behold, their conceptions are elevated: He has them no slight hint of the nature of His second coming. For this, Shall thus

come, means, with the body; which they desired to hear; and, that he shall come again to judgment thus upon a cloud. And, behold, two men sto to them. Why is it said, men? Because they had fashioned themselves completely as such, that the beholders m overpowered. Which also said: their words moreover were calculated for soothing: Why stand ye gazing up i They would not let them any longer wait there for Him. Here again, these tell what is greater, and leave the les unsaid. That He will thus come, they say, and that ye must look for Him from heaven. For the rest, they calle off from that spectacle to their saying, that they might not, because they could not see Him, imagine that He wa ascended, but even while they are conversing, would be present ere they were aware. For if they said on a for occasion, Whither goest Thou? (John xiii. 36) much more would they have said it now.<sup>4242</sup> All the Editions a Latin Versions connect with this the following sentence: Much more would they have said now, Dost Thou at t restore the kingdom to Israel? But it is evident, that at this point begins the recapitulation, or renewed expositio It is in fact a peculiarity of these Discourses, that Chrys. having gone through the exposition of the text, often, a here, goes over the same ground again, usually with some such formula as, But let us look through what has b from the beginning. Wilt Thou at this time, say they, restore the kingdom to Israel? (Recapitulation). They so knew his mildness, that after His Passion also they ask Him, Wilt thou restore? And yet He had before said to Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, but the end is not yet, nor shall Jerusalem be taken. But now they a about the kingdom, not about the end. And besides, He does not speak at great length with them after the Res They address then this question, as thinking that they themselves would be in high honor, if this should come t But He (for as touching this restoration, that it was not to be, He did not openly declare; for what needed they t learn this? hence they do not again ask, What is the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world? for they afraid to say that: but, Wilt Thou restore the kingdom to Israel? for they thought there was such a kingdom), b I say, both in parables had shown that the time was not near,<sup>4343</sup> The reference here must be to such parable Sower, The Leaven, The Grain of Mustard Seed. (Matt. xiii. 143), and the parable of the Growing Seed (Ma 2629), all of which seem to represent the progress of his truth as a long and slow development. To these migh such expressions as & 242 (Matt. xxviii. 20) and (Acts i. 8).G.B.S. and here where they asked, and He answered thereto, Ye shall receive power, says He, when the Holy Ghos you. Is come upon you, not, is sent, [to shew the Spirits coequal Majesty. How then darest thou, O opponen Spirit, to call Him a creature<sup>4444</sup> This sentence is from the later recension.?). And ye shall be witnesses to Me hinted at the Ascension. [And when he had spoken these things.<sup>4545</sup> The text of these Homilies is often great by the omission, especially in the recapitulations, of the words on which Chrys. is commenting.] Which they ha before, and He now reminds them of. [He was taken up.] Already it has been shown, that He went up into hea cloud, etc.] Clouds and darkness are under His

feet, (Ps. xviii. 9; xcvi. 2) saith the Scripture: for this is declared by the expression, And a cloud received Him: the Lord of heaven, it means. For as a king is shown by royal chariot, so was the royal chariot sent for Him. [Behold, two men, etc.] That they may vent no sorrowful exclamations, and that it might not be with them as it was with Elisha, (2 Kings ii. 12) who, when his master was up, rent his mantle. And what say they? This Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall thus come. Behold, two men stood by them. (Matt. xviii. 16.) With good reason: for in the mouth of two witnesses shall every word be established (Deut. xvi. 6): and these utter the same things. And it is said, that they were in white apparel. In the same manner as they had already seen an Angel at the sepulchre, who had even told them the thoughts; so here also an Angel is the preacher of His Ascension; although indeed the Prophets had frequently it, as well as the Resurrection.<sup>4646</sup> Here Erasmus has followed another reading (of E.), the very reverse in sense if indeed the Prophets did not foretell this, be not astonished, for it was superfluous to say any thing individually about this, being necessarily involved in the idea of the resurrection, ( ).<sup>15</sup> Everywhere it is Angels as at the Nativity, for that which is conceived in her, saith one, is by the Holy Ghost (Matt. i. 20): and again to Mary, Fear not, Mary. (Luke i. 30.) And at the Resurrection: He is not here; He is risen, and goeth to you. (ib. xxiv. 6.) Come, and see! (Matt. xxviii. 6.) And at the Second Coming. For that they may not be utterly amazed, therefore it is added, Shall thus come. (ib. xxv. 31.) They recover their breath a little; if indeed He shall come again, if also thus come, and not be unapproachable! And that expression also, that it is from them He is up, is not idly added.<sup>4747</sup> In the later recension it is added: but is declaratory of His love towards them, and of their election, and that He will not leave those whom He has chosen. And of the Resurrection indeed Christ Himself bears witness (because of all things this is, next to the Nativity, nay even above the Nativity, the most wonderful raising Himself to life again): for, Destroy, He says, this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up. (John ii. 19; , Chrys. adding the pronoun for emphasis. will raise it up. (John ii. 19.) Shall thus come, say they. If any therefore desires to see Christ; if any grieves that he has not seen Him: having this heard, let him show forth a admirable life, and certainly he shall see Him, and shall not be disappointed. For Christ will come with greater glory though thus, in this manner, with a body.<sup>4949</sup> The emphasis of the and is better preserved if we interpret them to mean visibly, or with the accompaniment of a cloud, in reference to the (9), rather than merely (as Chrys.) with a body. They had not raised the question as to his coming with or without a body. What they knew was whether he was coming in such a way that they could recognize him. G.B.S.; and much more wonderful see Him descending from heaven. But for what He will come, they do not add.