

11 Homily II. Acts I. 6 ·When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?· When the disciples intend to ask anything, they approach Him together, that the multitude of numbers they may abash Him into compliance. They well knew that in what He had said previously, ·Of that day and hour knoweth no man· (Matt. xxiv. 36), He had merely declined telling them: therefore they again drew near, and put their question. They would not have put it had they been truly satisfied with that answer. For having heard that they were about to receive the Holy Ghost, they, as being now worthy of instruction, desired to learn. Also they were quite free for freedom: for they had no mind to address themselves to danger; what they wished was to breathe freely again. They were no light matters that had happened to them, but the utmost peril had impended over them. And without saying 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 appears that they had not any clear notion of the nature of that kingdom; for the Spirit had not yet instructed them.³⁰³⁰ The 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 not 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 the kingdom,· as being now already fallen. For there they were still affected towards sensible objects, seeing they had yet become better than those who were before them; here they have henceforth high conceptions concerning God. When then their minds are elevated, He also speaks to them in a higher strain. For He no longer tells them, ·Of that day and hour even the Son of Man knoweth· (Mark xiii. 32); but He says, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power (Acts i. 7.) Ye ask things greater than your capacity, He would say. And yet even they learned things that were much greater than this. And that you may see that this is strictly the case, look how many things I shall enumerate. What, I pray you, was greater than their having learned what they did learn? Thus, they learned that there is a Son of God, and that God has a Son equal with Himself in dignity (John v. 17-20); they learned that there will be a resurrection (Matt. xvii. 9); that when He ascended He sat on the right hand of God (Luke xxii. 69); and what is still more stupendous, that Flesh is seated in heaven, and adored by Angels, and that He will come 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 the end? Clearly to learn the beginning. This, Moses learned, and the time when, and how long ago: and he enumerates them. And³¹³¹ Cod. C. omits this sentence here, and inserts it below (p. 12), where it is evidently out of place. The passage referred to seems to be Eccles. 51, 8. the wise Solomon saith, ·I will make mention of things from the beginning of the world·. And that the time is at hand, they do know: as Paul saith, ·The Lord is at hand, be careful for nothing·. (1 Thess. iv. 5). These things they knew not [then], and yet He mentions many signs (Matt. ch. xxiv). But, as He has just said, ·Not many days hence,· wishing them to be vigilant, and did not openly declare the precise moment, so is it here. However, it is not about the general Consummation that they now ask Him, but, ·Wilt Thou at this time,· say the disciples, ·restore the kingdom to Israel?· And not even this did He reveal to them. They also asked this [about the end of the world] before: and as on that occasion He answered by leading them away from thinking that their deliverance was at hand, and, on the contrary, cast them into the midst of perils, so likewise on this occasion but more mildly. For, that they may not imagine themselves to be wronged, and these things to be mere pretences, hear what He says: He instructs them that at which they rejoiced: for He adds: ·But 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, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth·. (Acts i. 8.) Then, that they may make no more enquiries, straightway He was received up. Thus, just as on the former occasion He had darkened their minds by awe, and by saying, ·I know not;· here also He does so by being received up. For great was their eagerness on the subject, and they would not have desisted; and yet it was very necessary that they should not learn this. For tell me,³²³² 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 more than this, and which their hearers would find much harder to believe. For tell me, etc. which do the Gentiles more disbelieve? that there will be a consummation of the world, or that God is become man, and issued from the Virgin? Here C. has the sentence: 'Also the wise Solomon saith, etc.' p. ii, note 1. But I am ashamed of dwelling on this as if it were about some difficult matter. Then again, that the disciples might not say, Why dost thou leave the matter in suspense? He adds, 'Which the Father hath put in His own power.' And yet He declared the Father's power to be one: as in the saying, 'For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth them by his will.' (John v. 21.) If where need is to work, Thou actest with the same power as the Father; where it behooves to leave the matter in suspense, dost Thou not know with the same power? Yet certainly to raise up the dead is much greater than to learn the things of God: the greater be with power, much more the other. But just as when we see a child crying, and pertinaciously wishing for something from us that is not expedient for him, we hide the thing, and show him our empty hands, and say, 'Show it him: he will have it not:' the like has Christ here done with the Apostles. But as the child, even when we show him our empty hands, persists with his crying, conscious he has been deceived, and will not leave him, and depart, saying, 'Such an one calls me:' and we give him something else instead, in order to divert him from his desire, telling him it is a much finer thing than the other, and then hasten away; in like manner Christ here acted. These illustrations, which seem to admit a half deceptive element in our Lord's 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 then knew how to anticipate. The disciples wish a temporal kingdom with personal prerogatives; Jesus promises the Kingdom of Truth and opens before them the life of spiritual growth and usefulness. The illustration would have been more appropriate, had Chrys. said: 'The child persists in his crying, but Jesus quiets him by giving him something far finer than he had asked.'—G.B.S. The disciples asked to have something, and He said He had it not. And on the first refusal he frightened them. Then again they asked to have it now: He said He had it not; and He did not frighten them again after having shown them His empty hands (as above, sc. the empty hands), sc. the empty hands. The mss. except C and A, and the Edd. have 'before' which gives no sense. [the empty hands], He said He had it not, and gives them a plausible reason: Chrys. therefore explains these sayings of our Lord (polemically 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 person 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 Truthfulness was very general in the Greek Church: not so in the early Latin Church. See the two Treatises of St. Augustine on Mendacio ('Lib. of Fathers,' Seventeen Short Treatises of St. Aug.) The stricter doctrine however is maintained by Basil, who in his shorter Monastic Rule peremptorily condemns all, and pious fraud (officiosum mendacium) in 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 falsehood is foreign from Christ and Christian men, be it in a small or in a great matter: yea, though a good end be served by it is never to be allowed, for the Saviour hath declared, that all lying is from the Wicked One.' Pallad, Hist. Lausiac. Bibl. Patr. t. xiii. p. 965. 'Which the Father,' He says, 'hath put in his own power.' What? Thou not know the things of the Father! Thou knowest Him, and not what belongs to Him! And yet Thou hast said, 'None knoweth the Father' (Luke x. 25); and, 'The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God' (1 Cor. ii. 10); and Thou not knowest this! But they feared to ask Him again, lest they should hear Him say, 'Are ye also without understanding?' (Matt. 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. Since he was about to leave them, and therefore in this discourse He says nothing painful. But how? He extols as great the things which would be painful, 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 cities of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not' (Matt. x. 5), what there He left unsaid. He here again

·And to the uttermost part of the earth;· and having spoken this, which was more fearful than all the rest, then t
 they may not again question Him, He held His peace. ·And having this said, while they beheld, He was taken u
 cloud received Him out of their sight· (v. 9). Seest thou that they did preach and fulfil the Gospel? For great wa
 gift He had bestowed on them. In the very place, He says, where ye are afraid, that is, in Jerusalem, there pre
 first, and afterwards unto the uttermost part of the earth. Then for assurance of what He had said, ·While they l
 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, b
 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 the sepu
 clearly that He is not there; but in the latter, they needed to be informed of the sequel by word of others: inasm
 then as their eyes do not suffice to show them the height above, nor to inform them whether He is actually gon
 heaven, or only seemingly into heaven, see then what follows. That it was Jesus Himself they knew from the fa
 had been conversing with them (for had they seen only from a distance, they could not have recognized Him b
; 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 i
 Heaven the Angels themselves inform them. Observe how it is ordered, that not all is done by the Spirit, but th
 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 fiery chariot, but ·a cloud received Him;· which was a symbol of Heaven, as the Proph
 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). For4040 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, r
 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 w
 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 w
 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 wa
 going away into heaven they saw with their eyes. O what a sight they were granted! ·And while they looked ste
 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.) A
 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 th
 meaning: else, what needed they to be told of their country, who knew it well enough? By their appearance als
 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] g
 where He was before?· (John vi. 62). Moreover the Angels did not say, ·whom you have seen taken up,· but, ·
 heaven:· ascension is the word, not assumption; 14the expression ·taken up,·4141 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 ow
 Divine power, they now say, going and afterwards express it that He will come, not that He will be sent. He asc
 He descended, by His own Divine power. So again it is said, ·A cloud received Him:· but in this He was not pas
 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

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 given them no slight hint of the nature of His second coming. For this, ·Shall thus come,· means, with the body; which was what they desired to hear; and, that he shall come again to judgment ·thus· upon a cloud. ·And, behold, two men stood with them.· Why is it said, ·men?· Because they had fashioned themselves completely as such, that the beholders might not be overpowered. ·Which also said:· their words moreover were calculated for soothing: ·Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?· They would not let them any longer wait there for Him. Here again, these tell what is greater, and leave the less unsaid. That ·He will thus come,· they say, and that ·ye must look for Him from heaven.· For the rest, they called off from that spectacle to their saying, that they might not, because they could not see Him, imagine that He was already ascended, but even while they are conversing, would be present ere they were aware. For if they said on a former occasion, ·Whither goest Thou?· (John xiii. 36) much more would they have said it now.⁴²⁴² All the Editions and Latin Versions connect with this the following sentence: ·Much more would they have said now, Dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?· But it is evident, that at this point begins the recapitulation, or renewed exposition. It is in fact a peculiarity of these Discourses, that Chrys. having gone through the exposition of the text, often, as we see here, goes over the same ground again, usually with some such formula as, ·But let us look through what has been said from the beginning.· ·Wilt Thou at this time,· say they, ·restore the kingdom to Israel?· (Recapitulation). They sought to know his mildness, that after His Passion also they ask Him, ·Wilt thou restore?· And yet He had before said to them, ·Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, but the end is not yet,· nor shall Jerusalem be taken. But now they are anxious about the kingdom, not about the end. And besides, He does not speak at great length with them after the Resurrection. They address then this question, as thinking that they themselves would be in high honor, if this should come to pass. But He (for as touching this restoration, that it was not to be, He did not openly declare; for what needed they to learn this? hence they do not again ask, ·What is the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?· for they were afraid to say that: but, ·Wilt Thou restore the kingdom to Israel?· for they thought there was such a kingdom), but as I say, both in parables had shown that the time was not near,⁴³⁴³ The reference here must be to such parables as the Sower, ·The Leaven,· ·The Grain of Mustard Seed.· (Matt. xiii. 1-43), and the parable of the Growing Seed (Matt. 26-29), all of which seem to represent the progress of his truth as a long and slow development. To these might be added 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 Ghost shall come upon you,· not, ·is sent,· [to shew the Spirit's coequal Majesty. How then darest thou, O opposer of the Spirit, to call Him a creature⁴⁴⁴⁴ This sentence is from the later recension.?]. ·And ye shall be witnesses to Me in all the world,· hinted at the Ascension. [·And when he had spoken these things.⁴⁵⁴⁵ The text of these Homilies is often greatly affected by the omission, especially in the recapitulations, of the words on which Chrys. is commenting.] Which they had heard before, and He now reminds them of. [·He was taken up.·] Already it has been shown, that He went up into heaven upon a 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 to ascend in a 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 taken 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. xvii. 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 their own thoughts; so here also an Angel is the preacher of His Ascension; although indeed the Prophets had frequently foretold it, as well as the Resurrection.⁴⁶⁴⁶ 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, (·... ..).· ¹⁵Everywhere it is said of the 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 before 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
 up, is not idly added.⁴⁷⁴⁷ 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 I4848 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
 though ·thus,· in this manner, with a body⁴⁹⁴⁹ 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 metaphorically
 (as Chrys.) ·with a body.· They had not raised the question as to his coming with or without a body. What they
 know 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.