

1:1 All That Jesus Began to Do and Teach

THE ADVANTAGE OF READING THE SECOND BOOK.

CHRYSOSTOM: To many people this book, both its content and its author, is so little known that they are not even aware it exists. I have therefore taken this narrative for my subject, both to initiate those who are ignorant and so that such a treasure shall not remain hidden out of sight. For indeed it will profit us no less than the Gospels themselves, so replete is it with Christian wisdom and sound doctrine, especially in what is said concerning the Holy Spirit. Let us then not pass by it hastily but examine it closely. For here we can see the predictions Christ utters in the Gospels actually come to pass. Truth shines brightly through the facts themselves, and a great change for the better takes place in the disciples now that the Spirit has come upon them. For the words which they heard Christ say—“Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these” ¹—and the events which he foretold, that they shall be brought before rulers and kings and be scourged in their synagogues, that they shall suffer grievous things and overcome all, ² that the gospel shall be preached in all the world, ³ all these came to pass in this book exactly as predicted, and many other things which he told them while he was with them.

HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 1.4

TEACHING FIRST BY CONDUCT, THEN WORDS.

CHRYSOSTOM: Consider how Christ validated his words through actions. “Learn from me,” he said, “for I am gentle and humble in heart.” ⁶ He taught us to be poor and demonstrated this through action, for “the Son of man,” he says, “has no place to lay his head.” ⁷ Again, he commanded us to love our enemies and taught this lesson on the cross, when he prayed for those who were crucifying him. He said, “If someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.” ⁸ He gave not only his tunic but also his blood. He bid also the others to teach in this way. Therefore Paul also said, “as you have an example in us.” ⁹ For nothing is more insipid than a teacher who shows his wisdom only in words, since he is then not a teacher but a hypocrite. For this reason, the apostles first taught by their conduct and then by their words. One may even say that they had no need of words, since their deeds spoke loudly. Even Christ’s passion may be called action, for in his passion Christ performed that great and wonderful act, by which he destroyed death and effected all else that he did for us. HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE

APOSTLES 1.10

THE REBUKE OF CONSCIENCE.

JEROME: For teaching is put to the blush when a person's conscience rebukes him; and it is in vain that his tongue preaches poverty or teaches almsgiving if he is rolling in the riches of Croesus ¹¹ and if, in spite of his threadbare cloak, he has silken robes at home to save from the moth. LETTER 127.4.¹²

THE SENSE OF ALL.

AUGUSTINE: This statement teaches us that, previous to this, Luke had written one of those four books of the gospel which are held in the loftiest authority in the church. At the same time, when he tells us that he had composed a treatise of all that Jesus began both to do and teach until the day in which he commissioned the apostles, we are not to take this to mean that he actually has given us a full account in his Gospel of all that Jesus did and said when he lived with his apostles on earth. For that would be contrary to what John affirms when he says that there are also many other things which Jesus did, and if they should all be written down, the world itself could not contain the books. ¹³ And besides, all agree that many things are narrated by the other Evangelists, which Luke himself does not mention in his history. The sense, therefore, is that he wrote a treatise of all these things to the extent that he made a selection out of the whole mass of materials for his narrative and introduced those facts which he judged fit and suitable to fulfill the duty laid upon him. HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS 4.8.9.¹⁴

PRACTICE BEFORE YOU PREACH.

JOHN CASSIAN: Take care then that you do not rush into teaching before doing, and so be reckoned among the number of those of whom the Lord speaks in the Gospel to the disciples, "So practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach but do not practice. They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger." ¹⁵ CONFERENCE 14.9.¹⁶

1:2 The Day Christ Was Taken Up

HIS COMMANDMENT.

CHRYSOSTOM: What did he command? "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." ¹⁷ Great is the praise of the apostles, when they have been entrusted with such a charge, that is to say, the salvation of the world. Words full of the Spirit! This he hints at in the expression

“through the Holy Spirit.” “The words I have spoken to you are spirit,”¹⁸ he said, inducing in the hearer a desire for learning the commandments and establishing the authority of the apostles, since it is the words of the Spirit they are to speak, and the commandments of Christ. HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 1.19

1:3 Appearing During Forty Days

HE APPEARED TO THE APOSTLES.

CHRYSOSTOM: Why did he not appear to everyone, but only to the apostles? Because he would have seemed a mere apparition to most people, since they did not understand the secret of the mystery. For if even the disciples themselves were at first incredulous and troubled and needed the evidence of actual touch with the hand and of his eating with them, what would have happened to most people? For this reason, it is through the miracles done by the apostles that he renders the evidence of his resurrection unequivocal, so that not only the people of those times, but also all people thereafter, should be certain of the fact that he has risen. For the certainty of the former came from seeing the miracles, while that of everyone else was to be rooted in faith. For this reason, our discussion of the apostles also proceeds from here. For if he did not rise again but remains dead, how did the apostles perform miracles in his name? “They did not perform miracles,” some will say. How then was our religion authorized? For certainly they will not disagree with this and argue against what is obvious. Therefore, when they say that no miracles took place, they embarrass themselves more than anyone else. For this would be the greatest miracle of all, if without any miracles the whole world came running to be taken in the nets of twelve poor and illiterate men. For the fishermen prevailed not by wealth of money, nor by cunning of words, nor by anything else of this kind. Therefore, the unbelievers, though unwilling, will agree that a divine power was present in these men, since no human strength could ever accomplish such great deeds. For this reason then he remained for forty days after the resurrection, giving evidence in this length of time of their seeing him in his own proper person, lest they believe what they saw was a phantom. Indeed, he was not content even with this but added also the evidence of eating at the table. This Luke reveals when he says, “while gathered with them.” The apostles themselves also always took this as proof of the resurrection, as when they say, “we who ate and drank with him.”²¹ HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 1.22

CONTRARY TO JOHN?

AUGUSTINE: It is not meant, however, that they had eaten and drunk with him daily throughout these forty days. For that would be contrary to John's statement, who has interposed the space of eight days, during which he was not seen, and makes his third appearance take place by the sea of Tiberias. ²⁶ At the same time, even although he [should be supposed to have] manifested himself to them with them every day after that period, that would not come into antagonism with anything in the [other] narrative. And, perhaps, this expression, "for the space of forty days," which is equivalent to four times ten and may thus sustain a mystical reference to the whole world or the whole temporal age, has been used just because those first ten days, within which the said eight fall, may not incongruously be reckoned, in accordance with the practice of the Scriptures, on the principle of dealing with the part in general terms as [if it were] the whole. HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS 3.25.84.²⁷

1:4 *Waiting for the Promise*

AN ARMY EQUIPPED.

CHRYSOSTOM: "He ordered them not to leave Jerusalem." Why? Just as when soldiers are about to charge a multitude, no one thinks of letting them issue forth until they have armed themselves, or as horses are not allowed to start from the barriers until they have got their charioteer, likewise Christ did not allow them to appear in the field before the descent of the Spirit, so that they would not be easily defeated and taken captive by the many. HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 1.28

THE SPIRIT Poured OUT AFTER THE SON DEPARTED.

CHRYSOSTOM: But why did the Holy Spirit not come to them while Christ was present, rather than immediately after his departure? Instead, although Christ ascended on the fortieth day, the Spirit came to them when the day of Pentecost had come. ²⁹ . . . It was necessary for them to have a longing for the event, and so receive the grace. For this reason Christ himself departed, and then the Spirit came. For if he had been present, they would not have expected the Spirit so earnestly as they did. For this reason he did not come immediately after Christ's ascension, but after eight or nine days. Our desire toward God is most awakened when we stand in need. For this reason, John sent his disciples to Christ at the time when they were to be most in need of Jesus, during his own imprisonment. Besides, it was necessary that our nature should be seen in heaven and that the reconciliation should be perfected, and then the Spirit

should come and the joy be unalloyed. For, if Christ had then departed, when the Spirit had already come, and the Spirit remained, the consolation would not have been so great as it was. For indeed they clung to him and could not bear to part with him. To comfort them he said, "It is to your advantage that I go away."³⁰ For this reason he delayed also for the intervening days, that they, for a while disheartened and standing, as I said, in need of him, might then reap a full and unalloyed joy. . . . For it cannot, it cannot be, that a person should enjoy the benefit of grace unless he is wary. Do you not see what Elijah says to his disciple? "If you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you,"³¹ that is, you will have what you ask for. Christ also said everywhere to those who came to him, "Do you believe?" For unless we are made fit for the gift, we do not feel its benefit very much. So it was also in the case of Paul: grace did not come to him immediately, but three days intervened, during which he was blind, being purified and prepared by fear. For just as the dyers first prepare the cloth that is to receive the dye with other ingredients to prevent the color from fading, likewise in this instance God first prepared the soul so that it was anxiously awaiting and then poured forth his grace. For this reason he did not immediately send the Spirit, but on the fiftieth day. HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 1.32

THE EFFECTS OF THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT.

HILARY OF POITIERS: He orders them to await the promise of the Father, which has been heard from his mouth. Certainly, the discourse even now³³ is concerned with the promise of his Father. Consequently, the manifestation of the Spirit is through the effects which these powers produce. [Awaiting the promise of the Father,] the gift of the Spirit is not hidden where there is the word of wisdom and where the words of life are heard. The effects of the powers produced by the Spirit are not fully manifest where there is the [rational] perception of the divine knowledge in order that we may not be like the animals, unaware of the author of our life through our ignorance of God, nor even through our faith in God in order that we may not be outside the gospel of God by not believing the gospel of God. The Spirit is not manifested only through the gift of healing in order that by the cure of infirmities we may render testimony to the grace of him who has granted these gifts; or through the performance of miracles in order that the power of God may be recognized in what we are doing; or through prophecy in order that through our knowledge of the doctrine it may be known that we have been taught by God; or through the distinguishing of spirits in order that we may perceive whether anyone speaks through a holy or an evil spirit; or through the various kinds of languages in order that the sermons in these languages may be offered as a sign of the Holy Spirit who has been given; or in the interpretation of the languages in order that the faith of the hearers might not be endangered through ignorance, since the interpreter of a language makes it

intelligible for those who are not familiar with the language. Rather it is through all the diversities of these gifts that the effects of the Spirit are poured out for the profit of everyone. ON THE TRINITY 8.30.³⁴

1:5 *Baptized with the Holy Spirit*

THE MANIFOLD WORKINGS OF THE SPIRIT.

CHRYSOSTOM: The Gospels, then, are a narrative of what Christ did and said, while the Acts are of what the other ³⁵ Paraclete said and did. Not that the Spirit did not do many things in the Gospels also, just as Christ here in Acts still works in people as he did in the Gospels, but then it was through the temple, while now it is through the apostles. Then the Spirit entered the virgin mother and fashioned the temple, now he enters into the souls of the apostles; then in the likeness of a dove, now in the likeness of fire. Why? There he showed the gentleness of the Lord, but here he is also taking vengeance. He reminds them opportunely also of the judgment. For when the need was to forgive sin, there was need of much gentleness; but when we have obtained the gift, it is henceforth a time for judgment and examination. HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 1.³⁶

PENETRATING GRACE.

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: This grace was not in part, but his power was in full perfection; for as he who plunges into the waters and is baptized is encompassed on all sides by the waters, so were they also baptized completely by the Holy Spirit. The water, however, flows round the outside only, but the Spirit baptizes also the soul within, and that completely. And why do you wonder at this? Take an example from matter, a simple and common example, but one that helps the ordinary person. If the fire passing in through the mass of the iron makes the whole of it fire, so that what was cold becomes burning and what was black is made bright, if fire which is a body thus penetrates and works without hindrance in iron which is also a body, why wonder that the Holy Spirit enters into the very inmost recesses of the soul? CATECHETICAL LECTURE 17.14.³⁹

1:6-7 *The Time of Restoration*

THE FATHER'S AUTHORITY.

CHRYSOSTOM: Without saying anything to him of the Holy Spirit, they put this question, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" They did not ask when, but whether it would be at this time, so eager were they to learn the day. But it seems to me they had no clear notion of the nature of that kingdom, for the Spirit had not yet instructed them. . . . For their affections were still formed by sensible objects. They had not yet become better than they were before. Thus from now on they had higher conceptions concerning Christ. Therefore, since their minds were elevated, he also speaks to them on a higher level. For he no longer tells them, "Not even the Son knows the day," ³ but says, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority." . . . Just as when we see a child crying and stubbornly wishing to take something from us that is not indispensable for him, we hide the thing, show him our empty hands and say, "See, we do not have it." Likewise Christ acted also towards the apostles. And when the child, even after we have shown him our empty hands, continues to cry, knowing he has been deceived, we leave him with the excuse, "Someone is calling me," and, in our desire to divert him from his first choice, we give him something else, which we tell him is wonderful, and then we hasten away. This is what Christ also did. The disciples asked to have something, and he said he did not have it. And on the first occasion he frightened them. When they asked a second time, again he said he did not have it, except now he did not frighten them, but, after showing his empty hands, he gave them a plausible reason, that "the Father has set it by his own authority." HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 2.4

RESPECT FOR THE DISCIPLES.

CHRYSOSTOM: And this he says, because he was very careful to honor them and to conceal nothing from them. Therefore he refers it to his Father, both to make the matter awesome and to dispel further inquiry on what was said. If this were not the reason, but he is ignorant, when will he know? Will he only know at the same time we do? Who would say this? He knows the Father clearly, just as the Father knows the Son. ⁵ Is he then ignorant of the day? Furthermore, "the Spirit searches everything, even the depth of God." ⁶ But are we to say that he does not even know the time of the judgment? But he knows how he must judge, and he understands the secrets of each. Was he to be ignorant of this, which is much more general? And, if "all things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being," ⁷ how

was he ignorant of the day? For he who made the ages clearly made the times also, and if the times, then also the day. How, then, is he ignorant of what he made? HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 77.1.8

KEEPING WATCH.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "It is not for you to know times or seasons." He has hidden that from us so that we might keep watch and that each of us might think that this coming would take place during our life. For, if the time of his coming were to be revealed, his coming would be in vain, and it would not have been desired by the nations and the ages in which it was to take place. He has indeed said that he will come, but he did not define when, and thus all generations and ages thirst for him. COMMENTARY ON TATIAN'S DIATESSARON.¹¹

WHY THE SON KNOWS.

HILARY OF POITIERS: The Son is not lacking in the knowledge of anything that the Father knows, and the Son is not ignorant, because the Father alone knows, since the Father and the Son remain in the unity of the nature. What the Son, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden, does not know is in harmony with the divine plan for maintaining silence. The Lord bore testimony to this when he replied to the apostles who had questioned him about the times, "It is not for you to know the times or dates which the Father has fixed by his own authority."

The knowledge is denied them. Not only is it denied, but they are forbidden to be anxious about the knowledge, since it is not for them to know these times. Naturally, after the resurrection, they now interrogate him about the times, since they had been informed previously when they broached the question, that not even the Son knows, and they could not believe that the Son did not know in the literal meaning of the term, because they again question him as one who does not know. Since they are aware that the mystery of not knowing is according to the divine plan for maintaining silence, they conclude that now, after the resurrection, the time for speaking has at length arrived, and they bring forth their questions.

And the Son does not tell them that he does not know but that it is not for them to know, because the Father has settled this matter by his own authority. Consequently, if the apostles realize that this statement, that the Son does not know, is in keeping with the plan of salvation and is not a weakness, shall we assert that the Son, therefore, does not know the day because he is not God? God the Father has determined it by his own authority, therefore, in order that it may not come to the knowledge of our human comprehension, and the Son, when previously interrogated, had said that he did not know and

now he does not make the same reply that he does not know, but that it is not for them to know, and that the Father, however, has decided upon these times not in his knowledge but in his authority. Since the day and moment are included in the idea of time, it is impossible to believe that the day and moment for restoring the kingdom of Israel is unknown to him who is to restore it. But, to lead us to the knowledge of his birth through the Father's unique power, he answered that it was known to him and, while revealing that the right to acquire this knowledge had not been conferred on them, he declared that this knowledge itself is dependent upon the mystery of the Father's authority. ON THE TRINITY 9.75.12

THE UNITY OF THE GODHEAD.

AMBROSE: But neither is the Father deceived nor does the Son deceive. It is the custom of the Holy Scriptures to speak thus, as the examples I have already given, and many others testify, so that God feigns not to know what he does know. In this then a unity of Godhead and a unity of character is proved to exist in the Father and in the Son; seeing that, as God the Father hides what is known to him, so also the Son, who is the image of God in this respect, hides what is known to him. ON THE CHRISTIAN FAITH 5.17.218.13

KNOWLEDGE OF THE KINGDOM.

BASIL THE GREAT: That is to say, the knowledge of such a kingdom is not for them that are bound in flesh and blood. This contemplation the Father has put away in his own power, meaning by "power" those that are authorized, and by "his own" those who are not held down by the ignorance of things below. LETTER 8.7.14

IN THE RESURRECTION AND THE ASCENSION.

CHRYSOSTOM: He had said earlier, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans." ¹⁶ What he did not say then, he added here, "and to the ends of the earth." Having said this, which was more fearful than all the rest, he held his peace. "When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight." Do you see that they preached and fulfilled the gospel? For great was the gift he had bestowed upon them. In the very place, he says, where you are afraid, that is, in Jerusalem, preach there. And afterwards he added, "and to the ends of the earth." Then again the proof of his words, "as they were watching, he was lifted up." Not "as they were watching," he rose from the dead, but "as they were watching, he was lifted up," since the sight of their eyes was in no way all sufficient then. For they saw in the resurrection the end but not the beginning, and they saw in the ascension the beginning but not the end. HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 2.17

GIFTS ARE FROM THE TRINITY.

CHRYSOSTOM: And they did become witnesses by their miracles. This is so, for the grace of the Spirit is ineffable, and innumerable are his gifts. Moreover, this took place that you might learn that the gifts and the power of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit are one. What appears to be proper to the Father also belongs in reality to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. "How is it, then," you will say, "that no one comes to the Son 'unless the Father draw him'?"¹⁸ But this is shown to be true of the Son also, for he said, "I am the way; no one comes to the Father but through me."¹⁹ And notice that the same thing is true of the Spirit also. For "No one can say, 'Jesus Christ is Lord,' except in the Holy Spirit."²⁰ And again, we are told that apostles have been given to the church, at one time by the Father, at another by the Son, and at another by the Holy Spirit, so we see that the varieties of gifts belong to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.²¹ HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 86.²²

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS DIVINE.

AMBROSE: And so, when the Lord appointed his servants the apostles, that we might recognize that the creature was one thing and the grace of the Spirit another, he appointed them to different places, because all could not be everywhere at once. But he gave the Holy Spirit to all, to shed upon the apostles though separated the gift of indivisible grace. The persons, then, were different, but the accomplishment of the working was in all one, because the Holy Spirit is one of whom it is said, "You shall receive power, even the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

The Holy Spirit, then, is uncircumscribed and infinite, who infused himself into the minds of the disciples throughout the separate divisions of distant regions and the remote bounds of the whole world whom nothing is able to escape or to deceive. And therefore holy David says, "Where shall I go from your Spirit, or where shall I flee from your face?"²³ Of what angel does the Scripture say this, of what dominion, of what power, of what angel do we find the power diffused over many? For angels were sent to few, but the Holy Spirit was poured upon whole peoples. Who, then, can doubt that that is divine which is shed upon many at once and is not seen; but that that is corporeal which is seen and held by individuals? ON THE HOLY SPIRIT 1.7.81-82.²⁴

1:9 *Christ Was Lifted Up*

THE CLOUD A SYMBOL OF HEAVEN.

CHRYSOSTOM: Why “a cloud took him”? This is another indication that he ascended to heaven. Not fire, as in the case of Elijah, nor a fiery chariot, but “a cloud took him.” This was a symbol of heaven, according to the words of the prophet, “who makes the clouds his chariot,” ²⁶ meaning the Father himself. Because of this he says, “on a cloud,” implying, “in the symbol of the divine power,” for no other power could dwell upon a cloud. Listen again to what another prophet says: “The Lord is riding upon a swift cloud.” ²⁷

HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 2.²⁸

1:11 *Taken to Heaven*

HE WILL COME IN THE BODY.

CHRYSOSTOM: Now, as they watched, their conceptions were elevated. He gave them not merely a subtle hint of the nature of his second coming. For this phrase—“thus he will come”—means with the body. This is what they desired to hear. And concerning the judgment he said again that he will come in this same way upon a cloud. HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 2.³⁵

A TRANSFORMED BODY.

AUGUSTINE: How did they see him go? In the flesh which they touched, which they felt, the scars of which they even probed by touching; in that body in which he went in and out with them for forty days, manifesting himself to them in truth, not in any falsity; not as an apparition, not as a shadow, not as a spirit, but as he himself said, not deceiving, “Handle and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see me to have.” ³⁸ Now, indeed, that body is worthy of a heavenly dwelling place, not subject to death, not changeable through ages. For as he had grown to that age from infancy, so he does not decline to old age from the age which was young adulthood. He remains as he ascended. He is going to come to those to whom, before he comes, he wanted his word to be preached. So, therefore, he will come in a human form. The ungodly, too, will see this. Those placed to the right will see it too; those separated to the left will see it too, as it was written, “They shall see him whom they have pierced.” ³⁹ If they will see him whom they have pierced, they will see the same body which they thrust through with a spear; [for] the Word is not struck by a spear. Therefore, the ungodly will be able to see this very one whom they were also able to wound. They will not see the God lying hidden in the body; after the judgment he will

be seen by those who will be on the right. This, therefore, is why he said, “The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son,”⁴⁰ because the Son will come, clearly visible, to the judgment, appearing in human body to human beings, saying to those on the right, “Come, blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom”; saying to those on the left, “Go into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels.”⁴¹ TRACTATES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 21.13.2-4.⁴²

CHRIST STILL HAS FLESH.

CHRYSOSTOM: In us “after the flesh” implies our being in sins; “not after the flesh” implies not being in sins. In Christ, however, “after the flesh” implies his being subject to the affections of nature, such as thirst, hunger, weariness, sleep. (For “he committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”⁴³ Therefore he also said, “Which of you convicts me of sin?”⁴⁴ and again, “The ruler of this world is coming, and he has no power over me.”⁴⁵) For him the phrase “not after the flesh,” then, means being freed from even these things, not being without flesh. For indeed with the flesh he comes to judge the world, with a flesh that is impassible and unmixed. We too will advance toward this, when our body conforms “to the body of his glory.”⁴⁶ HOMILIES ON 2 CORINTHIANS 11.3.⁴⁷

1:12 They Returned to Jerusalem

1:14 Devoted to Prayer