

John 1:14 - Part 2

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of living a life worthy of the doctrines of Jesus Christ, in order to attain eternal life and behold the glory of God.

Scripture: Psalm 49:7, Isaiah 26:10, Ezekiel 14:16, John 1:14, John 17:24

Topics: "Divine Nature", "Eternal Glory"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about beholding the glory of Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. He emphasizes how Jesus' glory surpasses that of all prophets, angels, and created beings, revealing His divine nature and authority as the King of all. Chrysostom highlights the miracles, sufferings, and power of Jesus, urging believers to live lives worthy of His teachings to partake in the eternal glory promised by Christ. He warns against the consequences of failing to behold this glory, urging vigilance, sobriety, and a pursuit of righteousness to avoid eternal punishment.

Transcript

And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

1. Perhaps we seemed to you the other day needlessly hard upon you and burdensome, using too sharp language, and extending too far our reproaches against the sluggishness of the many. Now if we had done this merely from a desire to vex you, each of you would with cause have been angry; but if, looking to your advantage, we neglected in our speech what might gratify you, if you will not give us credit for our forethought, you should at least pardon us on account of such tender love. For in truth we greatly fear, lest, if we are taking pains, and you are not willing to manifest the same diligence in listening your future reckoning may be the more severe. Wherefore we are compelled continually to arouse and waken you, that nothing of what is said may escape you. For so you will be enabled to live for the present with much confidence, and to exhibit it at that Day before the judgment-seat of Christ. Since then we have lately sufficiently touched you, let us today at the outset enter on the expressions themselves.

We beheld, he says, His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father.

Having declared that we were made sons of God, and having shown in what manner, namely, by the Word having been made Flesh, he again mentions another advantage which we gain from this same circumstance. What is it? We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father; which we could not have beheld, had it not been shown to us, by means of a body like to our own. For if the men of

old time could not even bear to look upon the glorified countenance of Moses, who partook of the same nature with us, if that just man needed a veil which might shade over the purity of his glory, and show to them the face of their prophet mild and gentle; how could we creatures of clay and earth have endured the unveiled Godhead, which is unapproachable even by the powers above? Wherefore He tabernacled among us, that we might be able with much fearlessness to approach Him, speak to, and converse with Him.

But what means the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father? Since many of the Prophets too were glorified, as this Moses himself, Elijah, and Elisha, the one encircled by the fiery chariot 2 Kings 6:17, the other taken up by it; and after them, Daniel and the Three Children, and the many others who showed forth wonders ; and angels who have appeared among men, and partly disclosed to beholders the flashing light of their proper nature; and since not angels only, but even the Cherubim were seen by the Prophet in great glory, and the Seraphim also: the Evangelist leading us away from all these, and removing our thoughts from created things, and from the brightness of our fellow-servants, sets us at the very summit of good. For, not of prophet, says he, nor angel, nor archangel, nor of the higher power, nor of any other created nature, if other there be, but of the Master Himself, the King Himself, the true Only-Begotten Son Himself, of the Very Lord of all, did we behold the glory.

For the expression as, does not in this place belong to similarity or comparison, but to confirmation and unquestionable definition; as though he said, We beheld glory, such as it was becoming, and likely that He should possess, who is the Only-Begotten and true Son of God, the King of all. The habit (of so speaking) is general, for I shall not refuse to strengthen my argument even from common custom, since it is not now my object to speak with any reference to beauty of words, or elegance of composition, but only for your advantage; and therefore there is nothing to prevent my establishing my argument by the instance of a common practice. What then is the habit of most persons? Often when any have seen a king richly decked, and glittering on all sides with precious stones, and are afterwards describing to others the beauty, the ornaments, the splendor, they enumerate as much as they can, the glowing tint of the purple robe, the size of the jewels, the whiteness of the mules, the gold about the yoke, the soft and shining couch. But when after enumerating these things, and other things besides these, they cannot, say what they will, give a full idea of the splendor, they immediately bring in: But why say much about it; once for all, he was like a king; not desiring by the expression like, to show that he, of whom they say this, resembles a king, but that he is a real king. Just so now the Evangelist has put the word as, desiring to represent the transcendent nature and incomparable excellence of His glory.

For indeed all others, both angels and archangels and prophets, did everything as under command; but He with the authority which becomes a King and Master; at which even the multitudes wondered, that He taught as one having authority. Matthew 7:29 Even angels, as I said, have appeared with great glory upon the earth; as in the case of Daniel, of David, of Moses, but they did all as servants who have a Master. But He as Lord and Ruler of all, and this when He appeared in poor and humble form; but even so creation recognized her Lord. Now the star from heaven which called the wise men to worship Him, the vast throng pouring everywhere of angels attending the Lord, and hymning His praise, and besides them, many other heralds sprang up on a sudden, and all, as they met, declared to one another the glad tidings of this ineffable mystery; the angels to the shepherds; the shepherds to those of the city; Gabriel to Mary and Elisabeth; Anna and Simeon to those who came to the Temple. Nor were men and women only lifted up with pleasure, but the very infant who had not yet come forth to light, I mean the citizen of the wilderness, the namesake of this Evangelist, leaped while yet in his mother's womb, and all were soaring with hopes

for the future. This too immediately after the Birth. But when He had manifested Himself still farther, other wonders, yet greater than the first, were seen. For it was no more star, or sky, no more angels, or archangels, not Gabriel, or Michael, but the Father Himself from heaven above, who proclaimed Him, and with the Father the Comforter, flying down at the uttering of the Voice and resting on Him. Truly therefore did he say, We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father.

2. Yet he says it not only on account of these things, but also on account of what followed them; for no longer do shepherds only, and widow women, and aged men, declare to us the good tidings, but the very voice of the things themselves, sounding clearer than any trumpet, and so loudly, that the sound was straightway heard even in this land. For, says one, his fame went into all Syria Matthew 4:24; and He revealed Himself to all, and all things everywhere exclaimed, that the King of Heaven had come. Evil spirits everywhere fled and started away from Him, Satan covered his face and retired, death at that time retreated before Him, and afterwards disappeared altogether; every kind of infirmity was loosed, the graves let free the dead, the devils those whom they had maddened, and diseases the sick. And one might see things strange and wonderful, such as with good cause the prophets desired to see, and saw not. One might see eyes fashioned John 9:6-7, (might see) Him showing to all in short space and on the more noble portion of the body, that admirable thing which all would have desired to see, how God formed Adam from the earth; palsied and distorted limbs fastened and adapted to each other, dead hands moving, palsied feet leaping amain, ears that were stopped re-opened, and the tongue sounding aloud which before was tied by speechlessness. For having taken in hand the common nature of men, as some excellent workman might take a house decayed by time, He filled up what was broken off, banded together its crevices and shaken portions, and raised up again what was entirely fallen down.

And what should one say of the fashioning of the soul, so much more admirable than that of the body? The health of our bodies is a great thing, but that of our souls is as much greater as the soul is better than the body. And not on this account only, but because our bodily nature follows withersoever the Creator will lead it, and there is nothing to resist, but the soul being its own mistress, and possessing power over its acts, does not in all things obey God, unless it will to do so. For God will not make it beautiful and excellent, if it be reluctant and in a manner constrained by force, for this is not virtue at all; but He must persuade it to become so of its own will and choice. And so this cure is more difficult than the other; yet even this succeeded, and every kind of wickedness was banished. And as He re-ordered the bodies which He cured, not to health only, but to the highest vigor, so did He not merely deliver the souls from extremist wickedness, but brought them to the very summit of excellence. A publican became an Apostle, and a persecutor, blasphemer, and injurious, appeared as herald to the world, and the Magi became teachers of the Jews, and a thief was declared a citizen of Paradise, and a harlot shone forth by the greatness of her faith, and of the two women, of Canaan and Samaria, the latter who was another harlot, undertook to preach the Gospel to her countrymen, and having enclosed a whole city in her net, so brought them to Christ; while the former by faith and perseverance, procured the expulsion of an evil spirit from her daughter's soul; and many others much worse than these were straightway numbered in the rank of disciples, and at once all the infirmities of their bodies and diseases of their souls were transformed, and they were fashioned anew to health and exactest virtue. And of these, not two or three men, not five, or ten, or twenty, or an hundred only, but entire cities and nations, were very easily remodeled. Why should one speak of the wisdom of the commands, the excellency of the heavenly laws, the good ordering of the angelic polity? For such a life has He proposed to us, such laws appointed for us, such a polity established, that those who put these things into practice, immediately become angels and like to God, as far as is in our power, even though they may have been worse than all men.

3. The Evangelist therefore having brought together all these things, the marvels in our bodies, in our souls, in the elements (of our faith), the commandments, those gifts ineffable and higher than the heavens, the laws, the polity, the persuasion, the future promises, His sufferings, uttered that voice so wonderful and full of exalted doctrine, saying, We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. For we admire Him not only on account of the miracles, but also by reason of the sufferings; as that He was nailed upon the Cross, that He was scourged, that He was buffeted, that He was spit upon, that He received blows on the cheek from those to whom He had done good. For even of those very things which seem to be shameful, it is proper to repeat the same expression, since He Himself called that action glory. For what then took place was (proof) not only of kindness and love, but also of unspeakable power. At that time death was abolished, the curse was loosed, devils were shamed and led in triumph and made a show of, and the handwriting of our sins was nailed to the Cross. And then, since these wonders were doing invisibly, others took place visibly, showing that He was of a truth the Only-Begotten Son of God, the Lord of all creation. For while yet that blessed Body hung upon the tree, the sun turned away his rays, the whole earth was troubled and became dark, the graves were opened, the ground quaked, and an innumerable multitude of dead leaped forth, and went into the city. And while the stones of His tomb were fastened upon the vault, and the seals yet upon them, the Dead arose, the Crucified, the nail-pierced One, and having filled His eleven disciples with His mighty power, He sent them to men throughout all the world, to be the common healers of all their kind, to correct their way of living, to spread through every part of the earth the knowledge of their heavenly doctrines, to break down the tyranny of devils, to teach those great and ineffable blessings, to bring to us the glad tidings of the soul's immortality, and the eternal life of the body, and rewards which are beyond conception, and shall never have an end. These things then, and yet more than these, the blessed Evangelist having in mind, things which though he knew, he was not able to write, because the world could not have contained them (for if all things should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written John 21:25), reflecting therefore on all these, he cries out, We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

It behooves therefore those who have been deemed worthy to see and to hear such things, and who have enjoyed so great a gift, to display also a life worthy of the doctrines, that they may enjoy also the good things which are (laid up) there. For our Lord Jesus Christ came, not only that we might behold His glory here, but also that which shall be. For therefore He says, I will that these also be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory. John 17:24 Now if the glory here was so bright and splendid, what can one say of that (which shall be)?

For it shall appear not on this corruptible earth, nor while we are in perishable bodies, but in a creation which is imperishable, and waxes not old, and with such brightness as it is not possible even to represent in words. O blessed, thrice blessed, yea many times so, they who are deemed worthy to be beholders of that glory! It is concerning this that the prophet says, Let the unrighteous be taken away, that he behold not the glory of the Lord. Isaiah 26:10, Septuagint God grant that not one of us be taken away nor excluded ever from beholding it.

For if we shall not hereafter enjoy it, then it is time to say of ourselves, Good were it for us, if we had never been born. For why do we live and breathe? What are we, if we fail of that spectacle, if no one grant us then to behold our Lord? If those who see not the light of the sun endure a life more bitter than any death, what is it likely that they who are deprived of that light must suffer? For in the one case the loss is confined to this one privation; but in the other it does not rest here, (though if this were the only thing to be dreaded,

even then the degrees of punishment would not be equal, but one would be as much severer than the other, as that sun is incomparably superior to this,) but now we must look also for other vengeance; for he who beholds not that light must not only be led into darkness, but must be burned continually, and waste away, and gnash his teeth, and suffer ten thousand other dreadful things.

Let us then not permit ourselves by making this brief time a time of carelessness and remissness, to fall into everlasting punishment, but let us watch and be sober, let us do all things, and make it all our business to attain to that felicity, and to keep far from that river of fire, which rushes with a loud roaring before the terrible judgment seat. For he who has once been cast in there, must remain for ever; there is no one to deliver him from his punishment, not father, not mother, not brother.

And this the prophets themselves declared aloud; one saying, Brother delivers not brother. Shall man deliver? Psalm 49:7, Septuagint And Ezekiel has declared somewhat more than this, saying, Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters. Ezekiel 14:16 For one defense only, that through works, is there, and he who is deprived of that cannot be saved by any other means. Revolving these things, then, and reflecting upon them continually, let us cleanse our life and make it lustrous, that we may see the Lord with boldness, and obtain the promised good things; through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom and with whom, to the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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