

# John 1:9-10

by St. John Chrysostom

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing and following Jesus Christ, and warns against the consequences of rejecting Him.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:24, Matthew 6:33, Luke 10:24, Luke 17:25, John 1:10

**Topics:** "Divine Illumination", "Worldly Detachment"

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## Description

John Chrysostom emphasizes that Jesus, referred to as the true Light, enlightens every person who enters the world, shedding grace upon all without discrimination. He addresses the ignorance of many towards Christ, attributing it to their own wickedness and willful rejection of the Light. Chrysostom highlights the importance of detaching from worldly desires and serving God wholeheartedly, contrasting the consequences of serving Mammon with the blessings of following Christ's teachings.

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## Transcript

That was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world.

1. Nothing hinders us from handling today also the same words, since before we were prevented by the setting forth of doctrines, from considering all that was read. Where now are those who deny that He is true God? For here He is called the true Light John 14:6, and elsewhere very Truth and very Life. That saying we will discuss more clearly when we come to the place; but at present we must for a while be speaking to your Charity of that other matter.

If He lights every man that comes into the world, how is it that so many continue unenlightened? For not all have known the majesty of Christ. How then does He light every man? He lights all as far as in Him lies. But if some, wilfully closing the eyes of their mind, would not receive the rays of that Light, their darkness arises not from the nature of the Light, but from their own wickedness, who willfully deprive themselves of the gift. For the grace is shed forth upon all, turning itself back neither from Jew, nor Greek, nor Barbarian, nor Scythian, nor free, nor bond, nor male, nor female, nor old, nor young, but admitting all alike, and inviting with an equal regard. And those who are not willing to enjoy this gift, ought in justice to impute their blindness to themselves; for if when the gate is opened to all, and there is none to hinder, any being willfully evil remain without, they perish through none other, but only through their own wickedness.

John 1:10

He was in the world.

But not as of equal duration with the world. Away with the thought. Wherefore he adds, And the world was made by Him; thus leading you up again to the eternal existence of the Only-Begotten. For he who has heard that this universe is His work, though he be very dull, though he be a hater, though he be an enemy of the glory of God, will certainly, willing or unwilling, be forced to confess that the maker is before his works. Whence wonder always comes over me at the madness of Paul of Samosata, who dared to look in the face so manifest a truth, and voluntarily threw himself down the precipice. For he erred not ignorantly but with full knowledge, being in the same case as the Jews. For as they, looking to men, gave up sound faith, knowing that he was the only-begotten Son of God, but not confessing Him, because of their rulers, lest they should be cast out of the synagogue; so it is said that he, to gratify a certain woman, sold his own salvation. A powerful thing, powerful indeed, is the tyranny of vainglory; it is able to make blind the eyes even of the wise, except they be sober; for if the taking of gifts can effect this, much more will the yet more violent feeling of this passion. Wherefore Jesus said to the Jews, How can you believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only? John 5:44

And the world knew Him not. By the world he here means the multitude, which is corrupt, and closely attached to earthly things, the common turbulent, silly people. For the friends and favorites of God all knew Him, even before His coming in the flesh. Concerning the Patriarch Christ Himself speaks by name, that your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it, and was glad. John 8:56 And concerning David, confuting the Jews He said, How then does David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, the Lord said to my Lord, Sit on My right hand. Matthew 22:43; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42 And in many places, disputing with them, He mentions Moses; and the Apostle (mentions) the rest of the prophets; for Peter declares, that all the prophets from Samuel knew Him, and proclaimed beforehand His coming afar off, when he says, All the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Acts 3:24 But Jacob and his father, as well as his grandfather, He both appeared to and talked with, and promised that He would give them many and great blessings, which also He brought to pass.

How then, says one, did He say Himself, 'Many prophets have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them'? Luke 10:24 Did they then not share in the knowledge of Him? Surely they did; and I will endeavor to make this plain from this very saying, by which some think that they are deprived of it. For many, He says, have desired to see the things which you see. So that they knew that He would come [to men] from heaven, and would live and teach as He lived and taught; for had they not known, they could have not desired, since no one can conceive desire for things of which he has no idea; therefore they knew the Son of Man, and that He would come among men. What then are the things which they did not hear? What those which they did not know? The things which you now see and hear. For if they did hear His voice and did see Him, it was not in the Flesh, not among men; nor when He was living so familiarly, and conversing so frankly with them. And indeed He to show this said not simply, to see Me: but what? the things which you see; nor to hear Me: but what? the things which you hear. So that if they did not behold His coming in the Flesh, still they knew that it would be, and they desired it, and believed on Him without having seen Him in the Flesh.

When therefore the Greeks bring charges such as these against us, and say; What then did Christ in former time, that He did not look upon the race of men? And for what possible reason did He come at last to assist in our salvation, after neglecting us so long? we will reply, that before this He was in the world, and took thought for His works, and was known to all who were worthy. But if you should say, that, because all did not then know Him, because He was only known by those noble and excellent persons,

therefore He was not acknowledged; at this rate you will not allow that He is worshipped even now, since even now all men do not know Him. But as at present no one, because of those who do not know Him, would refuse credit to those who do, so as regards former times, we must not doubt that He was known to many, or rather to all of those noble and admirable persons.

2. And if any one say, Why did not all men give heed to Him? Nor all worship Him, but the just only? I also will ask, why even now do not all men know him? But why do I speak of Christ, when not all men knew His Father then, or know Him now? For some say, that all things are borne along by chance, while others commit the providence of the universe to devils. Others invent another God besides Him, and some blasphemously assert, that His is an opposing power, and think that His laws are the laws of a wicked dÃ¡mon. What then? Shall we say that He is not God because there are some who say so? And shall we confess Him to be evil? For there are some who even so blaspheme Him. Away with such mental wandering, such utter insanity. If we should delineate doctrines according to the judgment of madmen, there is nothing to hinder us from being mad ourselves with most grievous madness. No one will assert, looking to those who have weak vision, that the sun is injurious to the eyes, but he will say that it is fitted to give light, drawing his judgments from persons in health. And no one will call honey bitter, because it seems so to the sense of the sick. And will any, from the imaginations of men diseased (in mind) decide that God either is not, or is evil; or that He sometimes indeed exerts His Providence, sometimes does not so at all? Who can say that such men are of sound mind, or deny that they are beside themselves, delirious, utterly mad?

The world, he says, knew Him not; but they of whom the world was not worthy knew Him. And having spoken of those who knew Him not, he in a short time puts the cause of their ignorance; for he does not absolutely say, that no one knew Him, but that the world knew him not; that is, those persons who are as it were nailed to the world alone, and who mind the things of the world. For so Christ was wont to call them; as when He says, O Holy Father, the world has not known You. Luke 17:25 The world then was ignorant, not only of Him, but also of His Father, as we have said; for nothing so darkens the mind as to be closely attached to present things.

Knowing therefore this, remove yourselves from the world, and tear yourselves as much as possible from carnal things, for the loss which comes to you from these lies not in common matters, but in what is the chief of goods. For it is not possible for the man who clings strongly to the things of the present life really to lay hold on those in heaven, but he who is earnest about the one must needs lose the other. You cannot, He says, serve God and Mammon Matthew 6:24, for you must hold to the one and hate the other.

And this too the very experience of the things proclaims aloud. Those, for instance, who deride the lust of money, are especially the persons who love God as they ought, just as those who respect that sovereignty (of Mammon), are the men who above all others have the slackest love for Him. For the soul when made captive once for all by covetousness, will not easily or readily refuse doing or saying any of the things which anger God, as being the slave of another master, and one who gives all his commands in direct opposition to God.

Return then at length to your sober senses, and rouse yourselves, and calling to mind whose servants we are, let us love His kingdom only; let us weep, let us wail for the times past in which we were servants of Mammon; let us cast off once for all his yoke so intolerable, so heavy, and continue to bear the light and easy yoke of Christ. For He lays no such commands upon us as Mammon does. Mammon bids us be enemies to all men, but Christ, on the contrary, to embrace and to love all.

The one having nailed us to the clay and the brickmaking, (for gold is this,) allows us not even at night to take breath a little; the other releases us from this excessive and insensate care, and bids us gather treasures in heaven, not by injustice towards others, but by our own righteousness. The one after our many toils and sufferings is not able to assist us when we are punished in that place and suffer because of his laws, nay, he increases the flame; the other, though He command us to give but a cup of cold water, never allows us to lose our reward and recompense even for this, but repays us with great abundance.

How then is it not extremest folly to slight a rule so mild, so full of all good things, and to serve a thankless, ungrateful tyrant, and one who neither in this world nor in the world to come is able to help those who obey and give heed to him. Nor is this the only dreadful thing, nor is this only the penalty, that he does not defend them when they are being punished; but that besides this, he, as I before said, surrounds those who obey him with ten thousand evils. For of those who are punished in that place, one may see that the greater part are punished for this cause, that they were slaves to money, that they loved gold, and would not assist those who needed.

That we be not in this case, let us scatter, let us give to the poor, let us deliver our souls from hurtful cares in this world, and from the vengeance, which because of these things is appointed for us in that place. Let us store up righteousness in the heavens. Instead of riches upon earth, let us collect treasures impregnable, treasures which can accompany us on our journey to heaven, which can assist us in our peril, and make the Judge propitious at that hour. Whom may we all have gracious unto us, both now and at that day, and enjoy with much confidence the good things prepared in the heavens for those who love Him as they ought, through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom, to the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory, now and ever, and world without end. Amen.

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