

John 7:9-24

by St. John Chrysostom

Christ's actions and teachings during the feast in Jerusalem demonstrate His humility, willingness to learn, and fulfillment of the Law in a more authoritative and better way.

Scripture: John 7:11-20

Topics: "Christology", "Hypocrisy"

Description

John Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of understanding Christ's actions as both divine and human, teaching us how to navigate difficult situations and make decisions in alignment with God's will. He highlights the contrast between the Jews' eagerness to kill Jesus during the feast and their reverence for the feast itself, showcasing their hypocrisy and enmity. Chrysostom delves into the murmuring among the people regarding Jesus, illustrating the division of opinions about His identity and intentions.

Transcript

When He had said these words unto them, He abode still in Galilee. But when His brethren had gone up, then went He up also unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

1. The things done by Christ after the manner of men, are not so done only to establish the Incarnation, but also to educate us for virtue. For had He done all as God, how could we have known, on falling in with such things as we wished not, what we must do? As, for instance, when He was in this very place, and the Jews would have killed Him, He came into the midst of them, and so appeased the tumult. Now had He done this continually, how should we, not being able to do so, and yet falling into the like case, have known in what way we ought to deal with the matter, whether to perish at once, or even to use some contrivance in order that the word might go forward? Since, therefore, we who have no power could not have understood what to do on coming into the midst of our foes, on this account we are taught this very thing by Him. For, says the Evangelist, Jesus, when He had said these words, abode in Galilee; but when His brethren had gone up, then went He up also unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. The expression, when His brethren had gone up, is that of one showing that He chose not to go up with them. On which account He abode where He was, and manifested not Himself, although they in a manner urged Him to do so. But why did He, who ever spoke openly, do so now as it were in secret? The writer says not secretly, but, as it were in secret. For thus, as I have said, He seemed to be instructing us how to manage matters. And, apart from this, it was not the same to come among them when heated and restive, as to do so afterwards when the feast was ended.

John 7:11

Then the Jews sought Him, and said, Where is He?

Excellent truly the good deeds at their feasts! They are eager for murder, and wish to seize Him, even during the feast. At least, in another place they speak thus, Think ye that He will not come to the feast? John 11:56; and here they said, Where is He? Through their excessive hatred and enmity they would not even call Him by name. Great was their reverence towards the feast, great their caution. By occasion of the very feast they wished to entrap Him!

John 7:12

And there was much murmuring among the people concerning Him.

I think they were exasperated by the place where the miracle had been wrought, and were greatly infuriated and afraid, not so much from anger at what had gone before, as from fear lest He should again work something similar. But all fell out contrary to what they desired, and against their will they rendered Him conspicuous.

And some said, He is a good man; others said, Nay, but He deceives the people.

Methinks the first of these opinions was that of the many, the other that of the rulers and priests. For to slander Him suited their malice and wickedness. He deceives, say they, the people. How, tell me? Was it by seeming to work, not really working miracles? But experience witnesses the contrary.

John 7:13

Howbeit no man spoke openly of Him for fear of the Jews.

Do you see everywhere the ruling body corrupted, and the ruled sound indeed in judgment, but not having that proper courage which a multitude especially lacks?

John 7:14

Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up and taught.

By the delay He made them more attentive; for they who had sought Him on the first days and said, Where is He? when they saw Him suddenly present, observe how they drew near, and were like to press upon Him as He was speaking, both those who said that He was a good man, and those who said that He was not such; the former so as to profit by and admire Him, the latter to lay hold on and detain Him. One party then said, He deceives the people, by reason of the teaching and the doctrines, not understanding His meaning; the other on account of the miracles said, He is a good man. He therefore thus came among them when He had slackened their anger, so that they might hear His words at leisure, when passion no longer stopped their ears. What He taught, the Evangelist has not told us; that He taught marvelously, this only he says, and that He won and brought them over. Such was the power of His speech. And they who had said, He deceives the people, altered their opinion, and marveled. Wherefore also they said,

John 7:15

How knows this man letters, having never learned?

Do you observe how the Evangelist shows here also their marveling to be full of wickedness? For he says not, that they admired the teaching, or that they received the words, but simply that they marveled. That is, were thrown into a state of astonishment, and doubted, saying, Whence has this man these things? When they ought from this very difficulty to have known that there was nothing merely human in Him. But because they would not confess this, but stopped at wondering only, hear what He says.

John 7:16

My doctrine is not Mine.

Again He answers to their secret thoughts, referring them to the Father, and so desiring to stop their mouths.

John 7:17

If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself.

What He says is this, Cast out from yourselves the malice and wrath and envy and hatred which has without cause been conceived against Me, then there is nothing to hinder you from knowing that My words are indeed the words of God. For at present these things cast a darkness over you, and destroy the light of right judgment, while if you remove them this shall no longer be your case. Yet He spoke not (plainly) thus, (for so He would have confounded them exceedingly,) but implied it all by saying, He that does His will shall know of the doctrine, whether it is of God, or whether I speak of Myself; that is, whether I speak anything different and strange and contrary to God. For, of Myself is always put with this meaning, that I say nothing except what seems good to Him, but all that the Father wills, I will also.

If any man do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.

What means, If any man do His will? If any man be a lover of the life which is according to virtue, he shall know the power of the sayings. If any man will give heed to the prophecies, to see whether I speak according to them or not.

2. But how is the doctrine His and not His? For He said not, This doctrine is not Mine; but having first said, it is Mine, and having claimed it as His own, He then added, it is not Mine. How then can the same thing be both His and not His? It is His, because He spoke it not as one who had been taught; and it is not His, because it was the doctrine of the Father. How then says He, All that is the Father's is Mine, and Mine His? John 17:10 For if because the doctrine is the Father's, it is not yours, that other assertion is false, for according to that it ought to be yours. But the is not Mine, affords a strong proof that His doctrine and the Father's are one; as if He had said, It has nothing different, as though it were another's. For though My Person be different, yet so do I speak and do as not to be supposed to speak or do anything contrary to the Father, but rather the very same things that the Father says and does. Then He adds another incontrovertible argument, bringing forward something merely human, and instructing them by things to which they were accustomed. And what is that?

John 7:18

He that speaks of himself seeks his own glory.

That is, He that desires to establish any doctrine of his own, desires to do so only that he himself may enjoy the glory. Now if I desire not to enjoy glory, wherefore should I desire to establish any doctrine of My own? He that speaks of himself, that is, who speaks anything peculiar or different from others, speaks on this account, that he may establish his own glory; but if I seek the glory of Him that sent Me, wherefore should I choose to teach other things? Do you see that there was a cause wherefore He said there too that He did nothing of Himself? c. v. 19, and 8:28 What was it? It was that they might believe that He desired not the honor of the many. Therefore when His words are lowly, I seek, He says, the glory of the Father, everywhere desiring to persuade them that He Himself loves not glory. Now there are many reasons for His using lowly words, as that He might not be deemed unbegotten, or opposed to God, His being clothed with flesh, the infirmity of His hearers, that He might teach men to be modest, and to speak no great thing of themselves: while for speaking lofty words one could only find one reason, the greatness of His Nature. And if when He said, Before Abraham was, I am John 8:58, they were offended, what would have been their case if they had continually heard high expressions?

John 7:19

Did not Moses give you the Law? And yet none of you keeps the Law? Why go ye about to kill Me? And what connection, says some one, has this, or what has this to do with what was said before? The Jews brought against Him two accusations; one, that He broke the Sabbath; the other, that He called God His Father, making Himself equal with God. And that this was no imagination of theirs, but His own declared judgment, and that He spoke not as do the many, but in a special and peculiar sense, is clear from this circumstance.

Many often called God their Father; as Have we not all one Father, has not one God created us? Malachi 2:10, but not for that was the people equal to God, on which account the hearers were not offended. As then when the Jews said, This man is not from God, He often healed them, and made defense for the violation of the Sabbath; so now had the sense they assigned to His words been according to their imagination, not according to His intention, He would have corrected them, and said, Why suppose ye Me equal to God?

I am not equal; yet He said nothing of the kind, but, on the contrary, declared by what followed, that He is equal. For, As the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them, so also the Son John 5:21; and That all may honor the Son as they honor the Father; and The works which He does, the same does the Son likewise; all these go to establish His equality. Again, concerning the Law He says, Think not that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. Matthew 5:17 Thus He knows how to remove evil suspicions which are in their minds; but in this place He not only does not remove, but even confirms their suspicion of His equality.

On which account also, when they said in another place, You make yourself God, He did not remove their suspicion, but even confirmed it, saying, That ye may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, He says to the sick of the palsy, Take up your bed, and walk. Matthew 9:6 This then He first aimed at, to make Himself equal with God, showing that He was not God's adversary, but that He said the same and taught the same with Him, and afterwards He sets Himself to the breach of the Sabbath, saying, Did not Moses give you the Law, and none of you keeps the Law?

As though He had said, The Law says, You shall not kill; but you kill, and yet accuse Me as transgressing the Law. But wherefore says He, None of you? Because they all sought to kill Him. And if, He says, I even

have broken the Law, it was in saving a man, but you transgress it for evil. And if My action was even a transgression, yet it was in order to save, and I ought not to be judged by you who transgress in the greatest matters. For your conduct is a subverting of the whole Law.

Then also He presses it farther, although He had said many things to them before, but at that former time He spoke after a loftier manner, and more suitably to His own dignity, while now He speaks more humbly. Wherefore? Because He would not continually irritate them. At present their anger had become intense, and they went on to murder. And therefore He continues to check them in these two ways, by reproofing their evil daring, and saying, Why go ye about to kill Me? and by modestly calling Himself, A Man that has told you the truth John 8:40, and by showing that murderers in heart are not worthy to judge others. And observe both the humility of Christ's question, and the insolence of their answer.

John 7:20

You have a devil; who goes about to kill you?

3. The expression is one of wrath and anger, and of a soul made shameless by an unexpected reproof, and put to confusion before their time, as they thought. For just as a sort of robbers who sing over their plots, then when they desire to put him against whom they are plotting off his guard, effect their object by keeping silence, so also do these. But He, omitting to rebuke them for this, so as not to make them more shameless, again takes in hand His defense with respect to the Sabbath, reasoning with them from the Law. And observe how prudently. No wonder, He says, if you disobey Me, when you disobey the Law which you think ye obey, and which you hold to have been given you by Moses. It is therefore no new thing, if you give not heed to My words. For because they said, God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow we know not whence he is John 9:29, He shows that they were insulting Moses as well as Himself, for Moses gave them the Law, and they obeyed it not.

John 7:21

I have done one work, and you all marvel.

Observe how He argues, where it is necessary to defend Himself, and make His defense a charge against them. For with respect to that which had been wrought, He introduces not the Person of the Father, but His own: I have done one work. He would show, that not to have done it would have been to break the Law, and that there are many things more authoritative than the Law, and that Moses endured to receive a command against the Law, and more authoritative than the Law. For circumcision is more authoritative than the Sabbath, and yet circumcision is not of the Law, but of the fathers. But I, He says, have done that which is more authoritative and better than circumcision. Then He mentions not the command of the Law; for instance, that the Priests profane the Sabbath, as He had said already, but speaks more largely. The meaning of, You marvel Matthew 12:5 is, You are confused, are troubled. For if the Law was to be lasting, circumcision would not have been more authoritative than it. And He said not, I have done a thing greater than circumcision, but abundantly refutes them by saying,

John 7:23

If a man receive circumcision.

Do you see that the Law is most established when a man breaks it? Do you see that the breaking of the Sabbath is the keeping of the Law? That if the Sabbath were not broken, the Law must needs have been

broken? So that I also have established the Law. He said not, You are angry with Me because I have wrought a thing which is greater than circumcision, but having merely mentioned what had been done, He left it to them to judge, whether entire health was not a more necessary thing than circumcision. The Law, He says, is broken, that a man may receive a sign which contributes nothing to health; are you vexed and indignant at its being broken, that one might be freed from so grievous a disease?

John 7:24

Judge not according to appearance.

What is, according to appearance? Do not, since Moses has the greatest honor among you, give your decision according to your estimation of persons, but according to the nature of things; for this is to judge rightly. Wherefore has no one of you reproved Moses? Wherefore has no one disobeyed him when he orders that the Sabbath be broken by a commandment introduced from without into the Law? He allows a commandment to be of more authority than his own Law; a commandment not introduced by the Law, but from without, which is especially wonderful; while you who are not lawgivers are beyond measure jealous for the Law, and defend it. Yet Moses, who orders that the Law be broken by a commandment which is not of the Law, is more worthy of confidence than you. By saying then, (I have made) a whole man (healthy), He shows that circumcision also was partial health. And what was the health procured by circumcision? Every soul, It says, that is not circumcised, shall be utterly destroyed. Genesis 17:14 But I have raised up a man not partially afflicted, but wholly undone. Judge not, therefore, according to appearance.

Be we persuaded that this is said not merely to the men of that time, but to us also, that in nothing we pervert justice, but do all in its behalf; that whether a man be poor or rich, we give no heed to persons, but enquire into things. You shall not pity, It says, the poor in judgment. Exodus 23:3 What is meant? Be not broken down, nor bent, It says, if he that does the wrong be a poor man. Now if you may not favor a poor man, much less a rich. And this I say not only to you who are judges, but to all men, that they nowhere pervert justice, but preserve it everywhere pure. The Lord, It says, loves righteousness; and, he that loves iniquity hates his own soul. Psalm 11:7, Septuagint Let us not, I entreat, hate our own souls, nor love unrighteousness. For certainly its profit in the present world is little or nothing, and for the world to come it brings great damage. Or rather, I should say, that not even here can we enjoy it; for when we live softly, yet with an evil conscience, is not this vengeance and punishment? Let us then love righteousness, and never look aside from that law. For what fruit shall we gain from the present life, if we depart without having attained unto excellence? What there will help us? Will friendship, or relations, or this or that man's favor? What am I saying? This or that man's favor? Though we have Noah, Job, or Daniel for a father, this will avail us nothing if we be betrayed by our own works. One thing alone we need, that is, excellency of soul. This will be able to carry you safe through, and to deliver you from everlasting fire, this will escort you to the Kingdom of Heaven. To which may we all attain, through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom and with whom, to the Father and the Holy Ghost be glory, now and ever and world without end. Amen.

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