

A study of Jesus Christ

The next degree of glorification is Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father.

It doesn't matter if one considers this the final degree of His glorification or whether one considers the judgment of the world as the final degree, which follows this degree. Personally, I believe that judging the world is the final degree since Christ has, then, made his enemies his footstool.

Psalm 110: 1 A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

So, why do we confess that Jesus ascended into heaven and added 'and is seated at the right hand of God?'

Christ ascended into heaven to show that He is the head of his church and that the Father rules all things through him.

That He is the head of His church:

Eph 1:19 - 23 ... These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might ²⁰which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Col 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

That the Father rules everything through Him:

Mat 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

John 5:22, 23 For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, ²³so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

A study of Jesus Christ

So, ascending into heaven and sitting at the right hand of the Father is what the Head of the church would do to prepare a place for each and every one of us.

However, to ascend into heaven and to sit at the right hand of God, is not the same because the one may be without the other. This article refers to Christ's sitting at the right hand of God and it differs from His ascension into heaven in three instances:

1. The one preceded the other: ...it was for this reason that Christ ascended into heaven that He might sit at the right hand of God.
2. Christ sits forever at the right hand of the Father but he ascended only once into heaven.
3. The angels ascend, and we shall also ascend into heaven, but neither they nor we shall sit at the right hand of the Father. "To which of the angels did God ever say, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?'" (Heb 1:13) Much less has God said this of any man, Christ only excepted.

To further study Christ's sitting at the right hand of the Father, we must answer the following:

- I. What the right hand of God signifies in Scripture
- II. What it is to sit at the right hand of God.
- III. Whether Christ has always sat at God's right hand.
- IV. What the fruits of His sitting at the right hand of the Father are.

I. What the right hand of God signifies in Scripture

The right hand of God, as used in Scripture, signifies two things:

1. The supreme power and virtue or omnipotence of God.

Acts 5:31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

Ps 118:16 The LORD'S right hand is lifted high; the LORD'S right hand has done mighty things!

A study of Jesus Christ

Ex. 15:12 You stretched out your right hand and the earth swallowed them. And other passages. Ps 17:7; 18:35; 20:6; 21:8; 45:4; 48:10; 60:5; 63:8; 74:11; 98:1; 110:1; Is 41:10; 48:13;

2. Supreme dignity, glory, and majesty.

Luke 22:69 But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.

Heb 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

It is the supreme dignity, glory and majesty that Christ's sitting at the right hand of God signifies when we confess this.

II. What it is to sit at the right hand of God

To sit at the right hand of God is to be a person equal with God in power and glory, by whom the Father works immediately, and governs all things. According to the definition which is commonly given to this phrase, it means to reign in equal power and glory with the Father.

This is true of Christ, for He does all things in the same manner as the Father does, and is endowed with equal power with the Father, which He also exercises. But the Son has always reigned in this manner; as did the Holy Spirit.

It is not said in the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit sits at the right hand of God, and He does not sit there because the Father does not govern all things, and especially the church, by the Holy Spirit, but by the Son.

Christ's ascension and sitting at the right hand of God should not be confused since they are two different actions with specific meanings and consequences.

The phrase *sitting at the right hand of God* is borrowed from the custom of kings and monarchs, who place those whom they wish to honor at their right hand, and have their own assessors, to whom they entrust certain departments of the government.

A study of Jesus Christ

It is in this way that Christ is said to sit at the right hand of the Father, because the Father will govern and rule immediately all things, both in heaven and earth, by Him. This sitting, therefore, is the supreme dignity and glory which the Father gave to Christ after His ascension, or it is the highest exaltation of the Mediator, in His kingdom and priesthood.

It is specific to Christ, because He alone is that almighty Person and Mediator through whom the Father immediately governs all things, and especially His church, which He defends against all her enemies. This glory and sitting of Christ at the right hand of the Father consists in these four things:

1. In the perfection of His divine nature, or in the equality of the Word with the Father, which He did not then receive, but always had. His divinity was unseen and unobserved during the time of His humiliation, but afterwards revealed itself with power and majesty.
2. *In the perfection and exaltation of the human nature of Christ, which excellence consists, firstly, in the personal union of the human nature with the Word. "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form," (Col 2:9) Secondly, in the excellence of his gifts, such as wisdom, power, glory, majesty, and others which are far greater and more in number than those which either the angels or men have received. He also greatly excels all creatures in heaven and on earth in these gifts. "From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another." (John 1:16)*

"For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit." (John 3:34)

3. In the perfection and excellence of the office of Mediator, which is prophetically, priestly, and regal, which Christ now, as the glorified Head of His church, gloriously executes in heaven in his Human nature.

For now He intercedes in glory, grants the Holy Spirit, and gloriously preserves and defends His church. This excellency of

A study of Jesus Christ

Christ's office is his exaltation in His kingdom and priesthood. It is the laying aside of the infirmity of his human nature he had during His stay on earth, and the consummation of that glory which was due him, as well by reason of his office as prophet, priest, and king, as by that of His person as God. "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Matt 28:18)

4. In the perfection of honor, reverence and worship, which angels and men ascribe and give unto Christ equally with the Father, because He is acknowledged, adored, and magnified by all as the Lord and Head of all.

And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him.' (Heb 1:6)

To which of the angels did God ever say, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? (Heb 1:13)

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name. (Phil 2:9)

This name, of which the Apostle speaks, consists in the excellency of the person and office of Christ, and is a declaration of both by His visible majesty that all may acknowledge and be constrained to confess that He is that king by whom God governs all things.

It was thus that Stephen saw Him standing on the right hand of God, crowned with visible majesty and glory, and adorned Him. Even before this, Christ had his exaltation at the right hand of the Father and certain parts of the excellency of his person and office, but now, He attained the consummation of His glory.

From what has now been said, we may give a more complete definition of Christ's sitting at the right hand of the Father. It is ...

1. to have the same and equal power with the Father,
2. to excel all the angels and men in His human nature, both in the number and excellency of the gifts which were conferred upon him, and also in visible glory and majesty,

A study of Jesus Christ

3. to declare himself Lord of angels and men, and so of all things which are created,
4. to rule immediately, in the name of the Father, His kingdom in heaven, and the whole world, and especially to govern the church in the same manner by His power, and finally,
5. to be acknowledged and praised by everyone as Lord and Head of all.

The honor which attaches itself to this sitting at the right hand of God does not belong to the Father, nor the Holy Ghost, but is specific to Christ alone, and is the highest degree or consummation of the honor which the Son obtained, and that in respect to both natures, but in a manner specific to each.

In respect to His human nature:

It is a real communication of heavenly gifts, or perfect glory, which the humanity of Christ had not before His ascension.

In respect to His divine nature:

This sitting at the right hand of God does not include any change of his Divinity, but is merely the laying aside of his humiliation, and the manifestation of that glory which He had with the Father before the foundation of the world, but which He had concealed during the time of His humiliation. It is also the manifestation of the right and title to the free and full possession of that which His Godhead had laid aside, as it were, in assuming our nature.

As the Godhead humbled itself, so it was again placed at the right hand of the Father, that is to say, it was gloriously manifested in the flesh.

“And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.” (John 17:5)

May we assume that the Holy Spirit, being also God, also sits at the right hand of the Father? No. Although the Holy Spirit is God, Lord, and Ruler of the church, the Holy Spirit does not sit at the right hand of the Father. Christ alone sits there, because He assumed a human nature, humbled himself, died, rose again, ascended into heaven and is mediator. The Father works immediately through Christ alone, but

A study of Jesus Christ

mediately through the Holy Spirit. The same order which exists in relation to the persons of the Godhead is preserved in their operation.

The Father does not work by anybody because He is of no one. He works by and of Himself. The Son works by Himself but not of Himself because He is begotten by the Father. The Holy Spirit works by Himself, but from the Father and the Son, from whom He proceeded.

Therefore, the Father works immediately by the Son, because He is before the Holy Ghost, not in time, but only in the order of existence, or of working, while He works mediately by the Holy Ghost.

It is for this reason that the Son, who is mediator, is correctly said to sit at the right hand of the Father.

If Christ was always the Head and King of the church, even before His ascension, what different meaning has His sitting at the right hand of the Father after His ascension? Christ was always glorious, but was not always exalted in the office of mediator, which is to say, in his kingdom and priesthood. The consummation of His glory, which consists in the administration of His kingdom, and priesthood in heaven, commenced with His exaltation at the right hand of the Father.

Does it mean we will also sit at the right hand of the Father according to Scripture "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne." (Rev 3:21) No we will not. We shall sit with Christ by a participation in His glory. Although the throne of the Father and the Son is the same, there will be many at the Throne; some in higher, others in lower places, some near the King, but the Son alone sits at His right Hand. Christ will not give to another the supreme dignity and glory given Him of the Father.

III. Whether Christ has always sat at God's right hand

In dealing with this question, we must first distinguish between the natures of Christ and then consider the time in which it took place.

1. Christ has always sat at the right hand of the Father as it respects his Godhead, if we understand this phrase to mean that He reigns in equal power with the Father, and that He is endowed with equal

A study of Jesus Christ

honor and glory. His divine nature was from everlasting equal to the Father in honor and power.

The same thing is true if we understand the phrase, *to sit at the right hand of God* to signify that Christ is the Head of the church, for the Son was always that person by whom the Father governed all things from the beginning, as He also created all things by Him. In this sense Christ was placed at the right hand of the Father by His eternal generation.

2. Christ was always at the right hand of God according to his Divinity, by virtue of his appointment to the office of mediator which was made from everlasting. This appointment had respect to His divine nature from the beginning.
3. The same as with the Divinity of Christ, his Godhead has been since everlasting since He executed the office of mediator from the very beginning of the world.

Christ, according to His humanity, was placed at the right hand of the Father after His ascension into heaven, and, in as far as his divinity is concerned, then began to manifest itself gloriously in His human nature in which it had concealed itself during the time of His humiliation.

When Christ lived on earth His divinity had also humbled itself, not by becoming weaker, but only by veiling and not openly manifesting itself.

Christ was, therefore, also placed at the right hand of the Father as to His Divine nature in this sense: that He then laid down that humility which He had taken upon Himself for our sakes, and made an open declaration of that glory which He had with the Father before the foundation of the world. He was exalted by manifesting and not by adding anything to His Godhead which it did not possess before, nor by making it more powerful or glorious, nor by declaring it before God, but before men, and by fully and freely claiming His own right, which His Divinity had concealed in assuming our nature.

Hence, He says: **"And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."** (John 17:5) This glory of which Christ speaks, He had not with men. He prays that as He always had this with the Father, so He might also manifest it unto men. This

A study of Jesus Christ

must not be understood in such a sense as though the Word underwent any change as to His Divinity, but only in the sense in which we have already explained it.

In respect to His humanity, Christ was, according to this, the first human to be placed at the right hand of the Father, when He ascended into heaven. It was at this time that He obtained His glorification, when He received that which He had not before. **"Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" (Luke 24:26)**

Christ is omnipotent with respect to His Divinity and not His human nature while sitting at the right hand of God. The Apostle wrote in Eph. 4:10 with respect to Christ's Divinity: **"He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe."** (Eph 4:10) and that He might fill all things with His gifts and graces but not with His flesh, skin, and bones.

Although Christ has been endowed with omnipotence since everlasting in his Divinity, the personal union between His Divine nature and his human nature does not confer these properties onto Him as a human. There are many things conferred upon His humanity by real transfusion, namely, other qualities than those which He had in His humiliation and upon the cross. There were far more and greater gifts conferred upon His human nature after His ascension, than were conferred upon angels or men.

In respect to the bestowment of these gifts, Christ, according to His humanity, was placed at the right hand of God. According to His Divinity, He was always at the right hand of the Father. However, as far as He was glorified in the highest degree, and in as far as He manifested this glory in His flesh and has obtained the perfection of glory, He was placed at the right hand of God.