

LORD'S DAY 19

50. Q. Why is it added,
And sits at the right hand of God?

A. Christ ascended into heaven
to manifest Himself there
as Head of His Church,¹
through whom the Father governs all things.

1. **Ephesians 1:20-23** ...which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.²² And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Colossians 1:18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn

from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

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

John 5:22,23 "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,²³ "that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

51. Q. How does the glory of Christ our Head,
benefit us?

A. First,
by His Holy Spirit
He pours out heavenly gifts
upon us, His members.¹
Second,
by His power
He defends and preserves us
against all enemies.²

1. **Acts 2:33** Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

Ephesians 4:7-12 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.⁸ Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men."⁹ (Now this, "He ascended"; what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ....

2. **Psalms 2:9** You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.

Psalms 110:1,2 The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool."² The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength

out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!

John 10:27-30 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.³⁰ I and My Father are one."

Revelation 19:11-16 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.¹² His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.¹³ He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.¹⁶ And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

46. Q. What comfort is it to you
That Christ *will come to judge*
The living and the dead?

A. In all my sorrow and persecution
I lift up my head
and eagerly await
as judge from heaven
the very same person
who before has submitted Himself
to the judgment of God
for my sake;
and has removed all the curse from me. ¹
He will cast all His and my enemies
into everlasting condemnation,
but He will take me and all His chosen ones
to Himself
into heavenly joy and glory. ²

1. **Luke 21:28** “Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”

Romans 8:22-25 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³ Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. ²⁴ For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

Philemon 3:20,21 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Titus 2:13,14 ...looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify

for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

2. **Matthew 25:31-46**

1 Thessalonians 4:16,17 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 ...since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷ and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰ when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.



In this Lord's Day we speak about the enthronement of our Lord Jesus Christ, the third “step” of His exaltation. With this we confess that Christ has ascended to His heavenly throne and rules as King over the church and the world.

Many “Christians” deny that Christ is reigning already. In Revelation 20:4 we read: “*And [the saints] lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*” They interpret this to mean that Christ will establish a literal thousand-year kingdom (or millennium) in the future.

We must understand, however, that the book of Revelation is filled with symbols. That is also true with the numbers in this book. They are not intended to be interpreted literally, but symbolically. (History has seen numerous sect leaders who have predicted the time of Christ's return using these and other symbolic numbers from Scripture, but whose predictions have failed.)

The number “one thousand” is a symbolic number. It is the product of ‘ten’ (the number of fullness) multiplied by itself three times (‘three’ is the number of

perfection). $1000 = 10 \times 10 \times 10$ or 10^3 . This means that Christ will reign for a perfect and full measure of time, however long that might be.

This reign is not something we still await, but is already in progress. Christ began this “thousand year” reign when He ascended into heaven. Scripture teaches us that Christ received power and authority at the time of His ascension (cf. Matthew 28:19,20).

When Christ ascended into heaven, He sat down on the throne next to the Father. The phrase, “*He sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,*” shows us two things:

1. **Christ’s glory** - To sit at the right hand was the highest mark of honour that a king could give to someone. This implied a sharing of the rule. When someone sat on the right hand of the king, he received a very noble position in government (cf. 1 Kings 2:19; Psalm 110, Matthew 20:21; Hebrews 1:3). The Catechism refers to Christ’s ascension as “*the glory of Christ*” in question 51 of this Lord’s Day.
2. **Christ’s authority** - The right hand is usually stronger than the left, so that sitting on the right hand was a more favoured and powerful position than sitting on the left (cf. Exodus 15:6,7; Psalm 118:15,16). The one who possessed greater authority would sit on the right hand of the king.

We must not think of Christ sitting on the floor beside the throne of the Father. He has been given an exalted position in heaven. Christ is King seated upon a throne! Christ said, “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Revelation 3:21).

The Father has not given up His throne or power. Both the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ are seated upon the throne in heaven. That means that they share the power. As the Catechism teaches us: the Father governs all things through Christ (cf. Matthew 28:18, John 5:22).

Concerning the authority which Christ has received, and the realm over which He rules, we make this distinction:

1. Christ is **King of the church** - He governs the church and defends it by His Word and Spirit. He remains the King of the church forever.
2. Christ is also the **King of creation** - Christ has been given authority to govern all things in creation. The Father has given Christ this authority over creation to further His church gathering work. When the work of gathering the church is completed, Christ will hand over His kingship over creation back to the Father (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

The catechism follows the statement of Christ’s enthronement with the question of the profit of His enthronement. “*How does the glory of Christ benefit us?*” The answer is two-fold:

1. The glorified Christ grants us **heavenly gifts**. In the early years of the Christian church, (in the time of the apostles), extraordinary gifts were given, such as speaking in tongues and miracles of healing. Although some today still claim to have the gift of tongues and the gift of healing, these claims are doubtful. These gifts were unique to the apostolic era.

This does not mean that the present day church is without gifts. We still receive many gifts, the chief one being the Holy Spirit Himself. As described by the apostle Paul: “*When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men...And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers* (Ephesians 4:8,11). We also continue to enjoy many gifts of the Spirit, such as knowledge, faith, love and hope. (Galatians 5:22). These are some of the gifts that the enthroned Christ gives us through His Holy Spirit.

2. The glorified Christ grants us **heavenly protection**. We, as Christians, need

this protection because our enemies never cease to attack us. We have four enemies, over whom our Lord gives us victory:

a. our own flesh - (cf Romans 6:14; 7:21-25). Scripture speaks of the war that rages in the believer. It is a war between the old nature and the new nature. It is a war between doing evil and doing good. By nature, we are prone to hate God and to rebel against all His commandments. The renewed Christian must struggle all his life against the old nature.

b. the world - (cf Luke 21:10-19, John 16:33, 17:14). Since we are renewed by the Holy Spirit we think and act differently than the world does. This disturbs the world. The light that shines through the piety or holiness of the saints exposes the world's evil. When they see our good deeds, their conscience accuses them of sin. Thus we incur the hatred of the world, which like to put out the light, and have us join them in their darkness.

c. Satan - (cf. Romans 16:20, 1 Peter 5:8). He is the deceiver of the world, the liar. He is God's enemy and also the enemy of all those who belong to God. He cannot destroy God, but he takes great pleasure in destroying everything and everyone who belongs to God.

d. death - (cf 1 Corinthians 15:26). The last enemy that we must face in life, is death. That is the last effect of sin that we must bear before our entry into eternal life, which is free from all the misery of sin. Christ has already defeated this enemy so that death cannot hold us.

As we have stated, there is great need for heavenly protection. Because of our weakness, we would not be able to stand for a moment if we had to stand by ourselves. Our enemies are greater than us, and we need protection if we are to persevere in our salvation.

This protection is granted to us through our glorified Christ. All things are in His control. He governs all history for the sake of the elect. Nothing can happen without His will. Thus we are safe when we hide ourselves under the pinion of His wings. Then we have assurance of what Paul speaks of in Romans 8:38-39, "*For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

In this life we must bear many evils at the hands of our enemies. Sometimes it seems as though they get away with it all. There does not seem to be any punishment for those who do evil against God and against us. We seldom see divine justice meted out to those who sin (cf. Psalm 73). It doesn't seem fair. Yet the Apostles' Creed also speaks about the justice of God. God will not allow these sins to go unpunished. Thus there is added to the creed, "*He will come to judge the living and the dead.*"

Those who do not cling to Christ, and who do not seek the forgiveness of their sins must make payment themselves for their wrongdoing. Christ will enter into judgment with them, and they will have to give account for every wicked deed done and every careless word uttered. Because they have not repented of their sins nor clung in faith to God's grace in Jesus Christ, they will be condemned.

Their condemnation is horrible. In the first place, it is **extreme**. It is anguish of body and soul. In the second place, it is **eternal**. Listen to how Scripture describes the condemnation of the ungodly:

"If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in

the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” (Revelation 14:9-11).

“The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:41,42).

‘Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched’ (Mark 9:44).

Does the thought of impending judgment give us reason to fear? After all, we are not perfect! We have not kept the commandments of God, as we ought. We all fall short of the glory of God. Is Christ going to judge us as well? Do we have anything to fear?

To this we may say “No!” providing that we are found in Christ. If we cling to

Christ in faith, and seek the forgiveness of sins through His blood, then the sins that we have committed will be blotted out, erased. God will no more bring them to remembrance.

We who belong to Christ have nothing to fear on the day of Christ’s return. For believers **have been** judged already. We were judged in Christ. *“Most assuredly I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life...” (John 5:24).*

Rather than receive punishment at Christ’s coming, we will receive a reward. God will reward our good works by granting us eternal life on a restored earth where we will enjoy heavenly bliss in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ. *“If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched” (Mark 9:43)*



Questions:

1. What is the third “step” of Christ’s exaltation?
2. What does Rev 20:4-6 tell us? Is the number given in this text to be taken literally, or is the number to be interpreted symbolically? If so, what is the meaning of that number?
3. Has Christ already ascended to the throne, and does He already rule as King? Has the thousand- year kingdom (millennium) already begun? If so, when did it begin? If not, when will it begin?
4. What two things are shown to us by the fact that Christ sits at the right hand of the Father?
5. Has the Father relinquished His throne, to leave Christ to rule alone?
6. What distinction do we make regarding the authority that Christ received and the realm over which He rules?
7. With what purpose in mind did the Father make Christ the King of creation? How long will Christ remain the King of creation?
8. What two benefits do we receive from Christ’s enthronement?
9. What are some of the gifts that Christ has given to the early church that are not given to the church today? Is the church today poorer than the early church? What are some of the gifts that Christ gives to the church today?
10. Christ grants us protection from and victory over four enemies. Which are they? Why is this protection needed? What does this protection give us?
11. At times it does not appear that we have a very just King, for we suffer much evil at the hands of our enemies, yet they seem to go unpunished. What else do we confess concerning our King that assures us that justice will be rendered?
12. How does Scripture describe the judgment that comes upon the ungodly?
13. Should the thought of judgment make true believers afraid? Why or why not? What will they receive at Christ’s coming?