

Christ seated at the right hand of God

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The New Testament has mentioned many times that Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God now. Why does it have to keep emphasizing this point? What does it mean?

Mk 16:19

So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

This is the second sentence in the conclusion of Mark. You can say that Mark was concluding the Gospel with this phrase of Jesus being ‘seated at the right hand of God’. Why is this sentence so important? If you are familiar with the Old Testament, you will be aware of the fact that this phrase, ‘seated on the right hand’, has an Old Testament background. This had to do with God’s promise for the descendant of David – the Messiah (Christ).

Mk 12: 35-37

And Jesus began to say, as he taught in the temple, "How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself said in the Holy Spirit, 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies beneath your feet"'. David himself calls him 'Lord'; so in what sense is he his son?" And the large crowd enjoyed listening to him.

Verse 36 is a quotation from *Psa 110:1*. This is the well-known Messianic prophecy, which were David’s words inspired by the Holy Spirit. Here, two ‘Lords’ were mentioned - *The LORD said to my Lord*. **【Note: All English versions distinguished the two Lords by using “LORD” and “Lord”.】**

Who were the two Lords? Who was the bigger one? It is actually not difficult to see that the first Lord was God Yahweh (*cf. Psa 110:1*) while the second Lord was Jesus Christ. God Yahweh is obviously the greater Lord since he was the one who made Jesus Lord and instructed the latter to sit at His right hand.

Jesus quoted David’s words from Psalms to counter the Jews who doubted his identity: if all the scribes regarded Christ as David’s descendants, then why did David address Christ as ‘my Lord’? In that way, would such a seniority and relationship not be mismatched? From the human’s point of view, this question was rather profound. Yet, it was actually not so and that was because God had elevated Christ, letting the latter sit at His right hand so that the latter became the Lord of all (*Act 10:36*).

David had received revelation in advance and understood God’s overall plan – that David’s descendant was not only to be the king of Israel, but that God also wanted to make him Lord of all. Therefore, David was more than willing to submit to God’s will and call his descendant – the Messiah chosen by God – as Lord and be subjected to his authority.

Jesus as the Messiah (Christ) conferred by God

Let’s return to the question raised at the beginning: Why does the Bible mention several times that Jesus Christ is now “*sitting at the right hand of God*”? One of the main reasons is

to testify that *Psa 110:1* has already come true. Jesus is the Messiah prophesized by David. God Yahweh has already made him Lord and Christ, and sat him at His right hand.

Ac 2: 33-36 has mentioned twice about God Yahweh elevating Jesus to His right side:

Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says:

‘The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’ Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ - this Jesus whom you crucified.’

“*Right hand*” is the symbol of glory and power, indicating how God Yahweh had already given the highest glory and authority to Jesus. Therefore, verse 36 says that God Yahweh has already made Jesus Lord and Christ. If you compare the conclusions of the first three gospels, you would notice that they are all declaring that God Yahweh had already made Jesus as Lord and Christ:

- 1) “... *He parted from them and was carried up into heaven*” (*Lk 24:51*)
- 2) “... *was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.*” (*Mk 16: 19*)
- 3) “*And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.”*” (*Mt 28: 18*)

God raised Jesus Christ up to heaven and sat him at His right hand, so that all things above and below know that God has already made him Lord above all. It is precisely why that Jesus could say to the disciples after his resurrection, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.” Such authority was not originated from him, but was granted by God Yahweh instead.

Of course, “*sitting at God’s right hand*” has other meanings. “*Right hand*” emphasizes that God and Jesus Christ share a very intimate relationship. Jesus, a descendant of David, a very lowly Nazarene, was actually elevated to the highest by God Yahweh! What an important and precious person that Jesus was to God Yahweh. Through Jesus, God Yahweh’s love for mankind has already been presented without reservation before us. Many Christians, out of their good intention of elevating Jesus, proclaim that the latter is on an equal footing with God. They have, however, not realised that it had veiled God’s will (*Job 38:2*), such that people cannot see the noble and good intention of God for mankind in doing so. If we were to take Jesus as God, it would have become a promise of a god for another god. As a result, God’s loving care, elevation of and reward to Jesus would have become one that was from one god to another. Given that Trinitarianism insists that there is only one God, and not two or three, this has become God’s promise for Himself. With that, God’s good will and the richness of the Bible is twisted and veiled by the Trinitarian teachings.

Jesus Christ is the sole representative appointed by God

In order to help us understand God’s good will towards mankind, the New Testament has been reminding us repeatedly that our Lord Jesus is now “*seated at the right hand of God*”. Hebrews, is the best example, which has mentioned about Christ being seated at God’s right hand many times.

Heb 1:3

And he is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation¹ of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...

This verse has used a striking picture to describe the glory of Jesus. Many Christians assumed that this verse is proclaiming that Jesus is God. That is actually not the case. Let's think about this: if Jesus was at an equal standing as the God who is the Majesty on high, then there would be two gods in Heaven since it says here that Jesus is "seated at the right hand of God". "*The Majesty on high*" is the alternative way for the Jews to address Yahweh God without mentioning His name (cf. *Dan 2:45; 4:1, 24, 32, 34*).

Another question is why does it need to emphasize that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high? Since it has already used the phrase "Majesty on high" to describe God, it would not be possible for Jesus to be at equal standing with God who is the Majesty on high, or else these three words "Majesty on high" would become meaningless. Therefore, if we proclaimed that Jesus was God, according to the description of Hebrews, we have to admit that there are two Gods (the Majesty on high and Jesus who is seated on the right hand to the former) and that Jesus would be the secondary "God" because he was not the Majesty on high.

Making Jesus God would not help us understand *Heb 1:3*. If *Heb 1:3* is meant to proclaim that Jesus is God, why would it emphasize that Jesus is "*seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high*"? This shows that it is quintessential to understand the meaning of "*Christ seated on the right hand of God*" correctly because that is the key to understand *Heb 1:3* (or similar verses).

"Christ seated at the right hand of God" means that the Majesty on high has already conferred the highest glory and authority to the victorious Christ. Having understood this point, the description of *Heb 1:3* is no surprise. Jesus Christ is the most perfect image of Yahweh God. It was because of his obedience, Yahweh God could dwell within him, to speak and work through him. It was precisely so that he became God's glorious light, reflecting the glory of God. Only he was worthy to be the sole representative of Yahweh God, taking control of everything, including the angels, by the power and authority given to him.

Among all the angels, was there even one to whom God said, "you seat at my right hand so that I would make your enemies your footstool"? Such a phrase has appeared many times in the New Testament. It says here, "*Among all the angels, to whom did God ever say...*", which means that God had never given such a great glory or power to angels. This has shown clearly that Christ's status has far exceeded the angels' because none of the angels were qualified to be seated at the right hand of God. Yet, Yahweh had conferred such a high privilege and honour to the man, Jesus.

Heb 1:6 says, "And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, "*And let all*

¹ References from other Chinese translated versions: "他反照着上帝的光辉，也完全反映上帝的本体....." (*Today's Chinese version*); "他是上帝荣耀所发的光辉，是上帝本质印出的相....." (*Lu Zhen Zhong Bible Translation*); "他辉映着天主的荣耀光彩，是天主本体最深的显像....." (*Catholic Pastoral Bible*); "这儿子是上帝的荣耀所发出的光辉，上帝本体的真相....." (*Jian Ming Sheng Jing*)

the angels of God worship him". This is yet another verse which seemingly supports that Jesus is God because it says here that all the angels of God worship him. If Jesus was not God, how could he receive the worship of God's angels? If we read this verse carefully, it would be obvious to see that such a conclusion cannot be established based on the following reasons:

- 1) The verse here addresses Jesus as God's firstborn, not God. Why would it address Jesus as the firstborn? That is because he is the representative of the sons of God (Christians). He is our eldest brother (*Heb 2:11-12, Ro 8:29*).
- 2) It says here that God instructed His angels to worship him. If Jesus was God, worshipping him would have been assumed without any justifications. Why would God need to instruct His angels to do so? We can thus see that God's angels worshipped Jesus because it was Yahweh's order. He lifted Jesus to the highest and seated him at His right hand, and ordered that all that were in heaven or earth or below to bow their knees before Jesus (*Phi 2:9-11*).
- 3) The meaning of the word "*proskuneo*" is prostrate, which carries with it a sense of respect and fear. The word could be used for worshipping God, but it could also be used to express fear, respect and obedience, acknowledging that the object involved is the master, benefactor or representative of God (*Gen 23:7, 27:29, 33:3, 37:10, 42:6, 49:8; Mt 18:26; Act 10:25; Rev 3:9, 19:10*). The New Testament has recorded many times on people prostrating before Jesus, such that the Chinese readers misunderstand that people regarded Jesus as God to worship. Strictly speaking, it should have been translated as "kneeling before Jesus" or "prostrating before Jesus" instead of "worshipping Jesus" because the people regarded Jesus as their rabbi (teacher), God's prophet and hence, they prostrate before him out of respect.

Heb 1:6 is describing how special a status and authority that God had conferred to Jesus, such that even the angels would need to prostrate before him to show respect. "Jesus seated on the right hand of God" has proved that he is the sole authoritative representative of Yahweh, who reigns over all that are created.

1Pet 3: 22

who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to him.

The apostle Peter had also received the same revelation, that Jesus had ascended to heaven, and was at the right hand of God. "at the right hand of God" means that Yahweh God had already conferred to him the highest glory and authority. That was precisely why all the angels and those with authorities and powers would have to subject themselves to him. This was what was said in *Heb 1:6* that all the angels of God worshipped him.

Jesus is the Son of Man who is the representative of those in the new creation. Therefore, his resurrection, elevation and receiving of glory had everything to do with us. If we respect him as our Lord and Christ, following him faithfully, we will also share his glory in the future (*Rev 3:23; Rom 8:17*). All such glory has been prepared by God for mankind before the creation of the world and He has intended to give it to us through the Son of Man.

Eph 1:17-23

¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might ²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far 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. ²² And He put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

This passage is very long which requires us to grasp slowly and I am merely mentioning a few key points here. This was Paul's prayer to "the God of the Lord Jesus Christ". Paul asked that the God of the Lord Jesus Christ would enlighten the eyes of the hearts of the believers, so that we could really know Him and understand the work He did on Jesus Christ and His eternal will for the believers. Verse 20 mentioned that God "raised him from the dead", followed by saying that it was God who "seated him at His right hand"; while verse 22 says "put all things in subjection under his feet", and all these were accomplished by God for Jesus. God fulfilled all these things so that Jesus Christ could be the first among all created.

Note the words of verses 22-23: If God subjected all things under the feet of Jesus, and that the Church is the body of Christ (that is, he is the head of the Church), it would imply that God's plan is to subject all things under the Church. Jesus is the Son of Man and he is the representative of the new man, so Hebrews addresses him as the general of our salvation (*Heb 2:10*).

Christ was raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of God. This is the assurance of the glorious salvation that God has given to us. The Lord Jesus has already set the foundation of victory for the Church with the help of Yahweh. Despite the many trials and tribulations that we need to face today, we need only to follow the Lord Jesus closely, we will surely share his glory in future because this is the glory that God has prepared for the Church before the creation of the world. Therefore, Paul in Ro 16:20 encouraged the Church, saying, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet". This is because the Church's commander-in-chief, Jesus Christ, has already gained victory, and Yahweh God will surely deliver His promise to Christ, "make your enemy your footstool"!

Jesus Christ is the Judge instituted by God

Act 7:55-56

⁵⁵ But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; ⁵⁶ and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

It has mentioned twice here that Jesus Christ was standing at the right hand of Yahweh. Why does it not emphasize on sitting instead of standing? That could be because Jesus saw that Stephen was going to be the martyr and that he stood up to see what was happening out of

concern. Notice that these two descriptions are not the same. The first one notes that “*Jesus standing at the right hand of God*” while the second one says “*the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God*”. Although Jesus had already been resurrected and ascended above, being at the right hand of God, Stephen actually addressed Jesus as “*the Son of Man*”. Was that rather a disrespect? The Bible addresses Jesus as “the Son of Man”, because he is a man (“*the son of man*” means “*man*”, cf. Num 23:19). This shows that Stephen did not see Jesus as God, he was the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.

Why did Stephen address Jesus as the Son of Man? Why did he emphasize that the Son of Man Jesus was at the right hand of God? These two questions are related. It is not hard to understand this if we are familiar with the Lord Jesus’ teaching.

Mt 26: 63-64

⁶³ *But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.”* ⁶⁴ *Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”*

The high priest wanted Jesus to pledge that he was not Christ, the Son of God. Jesus did not answer him directly, but only said that “*You have said it yourself*” (*In the original text: It is as you said*). Jesus did not want to answer directly because he knew that the high priest only wanted to find faults from his words and sentence him to death. Yet, he could not deny that he was Christ, the Son of God, so he quoted *Dan 7:13* regarding the prophecy of the Son of Man coming with clouds of heaven as his reply to the high priest. The high priest fully understood that the “*Son of Man*” in *Dan 7* was “*Christ*”, thus he sentenced Jesus to death on the spot, as he viewed that Jesus had spoken blasphemy by equating himself with Christ. Why did Jesus quote the prophecy from *Dan 7:13*? It just meant that on that day of judgment, they would know that Jesus is the judge entitled by Yahweh God because the latter had already conferred to the former the authority of judging all men (*Act 10:42; 17:31*).

Act 17:31

³¹ *because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”*

The apostle Paul had already said very clearly here. Yahweh God had already set the day of judging all men. Although Yahweh is the highest Judge, He has chosen to entrust His authority to a man (not god), that is the judge He has chosen, Jesus Christ (*Jn 5:22*). Jesus’ resurrection from death was to prove to the world that Yahweh’s will has been set and He would do as He said.

Talking about his coming again, Jesus had specially emphasised that “*the Son of Man sits at the right hand of the almighty*”. Stephen remembered these words of Jesus. Therefore, when he looked at the vision in the sky, he quoted these words, “the Son of Man stands at the right hand of God”. Although Jesus had yet to return, on the account of Stephen’s faithfulness, daring to testify for Jesus, God let Stephen see the vision of Jesus’ glorious return (*Mt 24:30 – the Lord Jesus as “the sign of the Son of Man”*). Stephen was worthy to see such a vision because he was the first martyr of the Church for Jesus and the Gospel. Yahweh God gave him this glorious vision to encourage him to be faithful unto death.

Perhaps, someone may ask: If Jesus was not God, why would Stephen ask Jesus to receive his spirit (*Act 7:59*)? Many Christians are very puzzled by this. Stephen, as the church's deacon, surely knew that when Jesus descends, he would gather his chosen people from all corners of the world (*Mt 24:30-31*). Therefore, before he died, he specially requested that the Lord Jesus accepted him. If the Lord Jesus did not accept him, he would not be his chosen people. Therefore, it was crucial whether the Lord Jesus accepted him or not.

Stephen also knew clearly that God had already conferred Jesus as Lord and Judge. His return will mean that the judgement commences. Therefore, he made two requests before Jesus the Judge and Yahweh God before he died: first, he asked the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit; second, he asked Yahweh God not to hold against² the people. Stephen pled for mercy for those who were seeking to kill him. That proved that he was a real disciple following the example of Christ, because that was the Lord Jesus' plea to God on the cross. This unexpected vision was to encourage Stephen. God let him see that his Lord had already won the victory and now sitting at God's right hand. God had already conferred the greatest glory and authority to Jesus. If Stephen were to be victorious as well, he could then share the glory with the Lord Jesus. This vision had brought a great hope and comfort to Stephen who was going to be martyred.

Jesus Christ is the New Testament High Priest appointed by God

Heb 8:1

Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens

Heb 10:11-14

¹¹ Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; ¹² but he, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time onward until his enemies be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴ For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

Verses 12-13 mentioned once again that Christ sits at the right hand of God, waiting for his enemy to become a footstool of his feet. "*his enemies be made a footstool for his feet*" is Yahweh God's promise to Christ, which was the work of God. This promise has not been fulfilled completely because the time is not up yet. The context of this passage is about the priest and the sin offering. The sin offering in the Old Testament was not perfect and it could not take away the sins of man completely. The New Testament high priest, Jesus Christ, offered himself to Yahweh God as the ransom for all. Jesus – the lamb of God sitting at the right hand of God – has proved that Yahweh God has already accepted the offering of Jesus, such that he could be the salvation of all mankind. Anyone who come before him could be made perfect and acceptable to Yahweh God.

Rom 8:34

who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was [a]raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

² Stephen mentioned about "Lord" without a specific name (*Act 7:31, 33, 49, 60*). All the first 3 occasions refer to Yahweh God, so we can assume that the 'Lord' in verse 60 would also refer to Yahweh while the 'Lord' mentioned in verse 59 was specifically mentioned as the Lord Jesus.

Jesus Christ has already been raised from the dead and now sitting at the right hand of God. What then does he do now? It tells us here that he is interceding for us. If Jesus was God, would he still need to pray to another God to intercede for us? This shows that he is not God! He is the New Testament high priest that God has prepared for us. The job of the high priest is to intercede to God on behalf of the people. Therefore, the Hebrews writers encouraged us, saying that since God has already prepared for us a perfect and faithful high priest, we should enter into the Holy of Holies with full confidence and go before Yahweh God (*Heb 10:19-22*).

The Lamb seated on the throne

After understanding the biblical teaching of “*Christ sitting at the right hand of God*”, the meaning of some of the verses in Revelations which seemed to prove that “Jesus was God” can be resolved now. One such example is in *Rev 22: 1 and 3*:

¹ *Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,*

³ *There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him.*

Both verses mentioned God and the Lamb (Christ) who have their own thrones and that they are side by side. If Jesus Christ was not God, why would his throne be mentioned together with that of God's. Let's consider, how could Christ get to sit at the right hand of God? If Yahweh God were to elevate Christ to His right hand, He had to prepare a special throne for Christ which is at the right hand of God's throne. Only then would Christ be able to sit at the right hand of God. God had prepared a special seat for Christ, that is far more noble, glorious than the seats of the 24 elders because God had given him that seat such that he could be at the right hand of God, which is the most noble seat nearest to God. It is precisely because Christ's seat is at the right hand of God's throne, that whenever the heavenly beings worship Yahweh God who is seated on the throne, it is as if Christ also receives the “*worship*”. Christ certainly receives the respect from the heavenly beings, but they are only respecting him as Lord (*Phi 2:9-11*), and not worshipping him as God. This is a point which we need to differentiate clearly.

Revelations concluded with Christ being seated with God is very appropriate. This has once again confirmed that the lamb that was slain for the redemption of mankind had already been elevated to the highest and become the sole authoritative representative of God. He is the Lord of Lords established by God, representing Yahweh God to judge and rule over all created things!

Yahweh wants us to imitate Jesus Christ and be glorified

Heb 12:2

fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Why was Jesus worthy of such great glory? That is because he had sacrificed himself, faced insults, bore the sufferings of the cross for the sake of mankind's salvation. Thus, Yahweh

God exalted him on high and seated him at the right hand of Himself. The Hebrews writers encouraged us to look to this high priest who loved us, imitating his faithfulness unto death and not compromising in face of temptations or deceits. If we could endure all sorts of tests and tribulations, we would definitely share his glory in the future (*Rom 8:17*).

Col 3:1

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Paul reminded the believers that Christ was already seated at the right hand of God. Why was such a reminder so important? That was because the believers had to face many tribulations for their faith. The Bible encourages us to always remember that Christ is already seated at the right hand of God because that is the assurance of the glory that faithful believers will receive in future! Many Christians think that not emphasising Jesus as God means lowering his status and not glorifying him. Such a view is resulted from not understanding the biblical teaching. The Bible has clearly told us that although Jesus was the son of man, Yahweh God raised him on high and even over and above the angels out of His love for mankind. Such glory is not just given to Jesus, but that the Christians who are victorious would also share it with Jesus in future!

The phrase, “*Jesus seated at the right hand of God*” is to remind us that in God’s great salvation plan, God has placed man over and above all things, including the angels. That was precisely why Paul told the Church that our future task is to manage and judge angels (*1Cor 6:3*).

The Bible has mentioned many times that “*all things are under him*” (*1Cor 15:27, Eph 15:27, Heb 2:8*), who is this ‘*him*’ referring to? Perhaps you think it refers to Christ. In fact, it was not only referring to Christ, but also us because he is our representative. Christ is the head of the church and we are his body. We are one in him. The glory, honour, power that Yahweh God now grants to Christ will also be given to the Church in future. No wonder the Psalmist had such a reflection in *Psalms 8*:

What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty! You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet (Psa 8:4-6, Heb 2:6-7).

~ End ~
