

## He Sits and Shall Come Again

Ephesians 1:10, 21–23,

Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 50–52

*Studies in the Heidelberg Catechism #25*

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**W**HEN we read the Word, we hear the voice of God. When we read our catechism, we hear the voice of the church. Let's join our voices to that of the historic church tonight with the words of Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 50–52:

Q. 50. Why the next words: “and sits at the right hand of God”?

**A. Christ ascended to heaven, there to show that he is head of his church, through whom the Father governs all things.**

Q. 51. How does this glory of Christ our head benefit us?

**First, through his Holy Spirit he pours out gifts from heaven upon us his members. Second, by his power he defends us and preserves us from all enemies.**

Q. 52. How does Christ's return “to judge the living and the dead” comfort you?

**A. In all distress and persecution, with uplifted head, I confidently await the very judge who has already offered himself to the judgment of God in my place and removed the whole curse from me. Christ will cast all his enemies and mine into everlasting condemnation, but will take me and all his chosen ones to himself into the joy and glory of heaven.**

First comes the pre-tribulation rapture, then the Antichrist and 3½-year tribulation, then the 3½-year great tribulation, and finally the

Millennium. Or it is Antichrist and 3½-year tribulation, then mid-trib rapture, 3½-year great tribulation, and finally the Millennium? Or does the rapture happen at the end of the seven-year tribulation just before the Millennium?

I mention this not to make fun of our Dispensational Premillennial brothers and sisters but to illustrate why we need the ancient creeds and Reformation catechisms. Why? One of their purposes is to keep the main thing the main thing. We confess that Jesus came to earth, died, rose again, ascended and now sits at God's right hand and shall come again at the end of the age. This is the clear teaching of Scripture. These basic truths should illuminate the unclear passages of Scripture. We shouldn't turn to Daniel or Ezekiel or Revelation first to build our eschatology. Eschatology is meant to comfort, not confuse. Our Catechism focuses on the clear truths to say that Jesus reigns now and he will reign in the future. This creates comfort and confidence, not chaos and fear in faith (1 Thes. 4:18; 5:11).

### **His Present Reign (Q&A 50–51)**

If Jesus is coming in the future, does that mean he is not in charge now? I remember when we started this church and I was preaching through Revelation someone saying to me: "If Jesus is in control, he's not doing a very

good job.” Have you ever heard someone say that? It sounds plausible, doesn’t it? Look at all the persecution of God’s people; look at all the suffering in the world. But what did Jesus say? “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matt. 28:19). That’s not some creed or theologian; that’s Jesus! And what does our New Testament reading tonight say? Paul says Jesus reigns over all authority *now*, all things are under his feet *now*, and he is head of all things for the church *now* (Eph. 1:20–23).

Quickly look at the context. Paul praises our Triune God—the Father for **ble[ss]ing us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places** (v. 3), **cho[os]ing us and predestin[ing] us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world** (vv. 4, 5) for **adoption...as sons** (v. 5). And all this **to the praise of his glorious grace** (v. 6). Paul then praises the Son for **redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses** (v. 7) and this, again, is **to the praise of his glory** (v. 12). Finally he praises the Holy Spirit who has **sealed us as the guarantee of our inheritance** (vv. 13, 14), which, again, is **to the praise of his glory** (v. 14).

Then Paul prays that we would **know** three things: first, **what is the hope to which he has called you**, second, **what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints**, and third, **what is the immeasurable**

**greatness of his power toward us** (vv. 18, 19). And notice something about God's power. His power that is at work in us now is the same power that he **worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and**. That's awesome! Then here's a key phrase to note: the Father **seated [Jesus] at his right hand in the heavenly places**. And to illustrate what that means Paul says he is seated **far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named** and then he adds **not only in this age but also in the one to come**. This is all of Satan's power as well as all the power of the system of this world. Jesus' present reign can't get any more comprehensive than that! So Paul cites Psalm 8 to say the Father **put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church** (vv. 21–23).

Our Catechism gives us two applications of this. First of all, because Jesus is presently reigning he **pours out gifts...upon us** by his Spirit. What has Christ given you so that you can serve him, this church, and the world? And when you do it, know you are being empowered by the reigning and ruling King! Second, because Jesus is presently reigning he **preserves us from all enemies** (Q&A 51). Whatever you or I are going through at the moment we can rely on Jesus' power under us, holding us up in at all!

## **His Future Reign (Q&A 52)**

“He sits at the right hand of God” we say in the Creed and that’s a confession of Jesus’ present reign. But then we say, “He shall come again.” A while back when I flew in and out of Chicago, I believe, we flew over the hub for all trains in and out of the city. Tracks were going everywhere; I don’t even know how you’d know which one when this way or that. Eschatology can be like grand central station with so many options: Pre-Mil, Post-Mil, and A-Mil.

But our Creed is expressing what Paul says so clearly here of the future reign of Jesus Christ. While praising Jesus for his work of redemption in verse 7, notice how he says this was a revelation of the previously hidden purpose of God the Father **as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth** (v. 10). Here Paul is speaking of the ultimate goal to bring all things in heaven and earth back into union and communion with God as he intended them to be. When? In **the fullness of time**. When is that? Remember Jesus’ words to his disciples after he rose but before he ascended: “It is not for you to know times or season that the Father has fixed by his own authority” (Acts 1:7). What we do know is that he “will come in the same way as [the disciples] saw him go into

heaven” (Acts 1:11). And our desire is this coming. Paul says we are presenting “waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13)

The comfort of this is applied by our Catechism. In this age the church of Jesus suffers and is persecuted. Knowing that Jesus will reign in the future means that I can leave it to God to cast all my enemies away from his presence on that day while I rejoice even now that I **and all his chosen ones** will be brought **to himself into the joy and glory of heaven** (Q&A 52). Amen.