

Q & A

Week 3: June 17, 2020

Q In Stephen's vision when he was being martyred, what is the significance of Jesus *standing* (as opposed to being seated) at the right hand of the Father?

Acts 7:55-56—“But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

- Background: The Ascension and Session (Sitting Down) of Christ
 - Christ's sitting down is his heavenly enthronement
 - Ephesians 1:20b-23—“He raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”
 - Christ sitting down fulfills Old Testament symbolism
 - Use of Psalm 110:1 in Acts 2:32-36—“This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore *exalted* at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “The Lord said to my Lord, “*Sit* at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”
 - Christ's seat at God's right hand represents his supremacy
 - Hebrews 1:3b-4—“After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.”
 - Hebrews 8:1-2—“Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.”
 - Christ's sitting represents his *completion* of his atoning work and *anticipation* of future glory
 - Hebrews 10:11-14—“And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”
 - But Christ's *presence* at God's right hand is more basic and important than his *posture* (standing vs. sitting) there. Also, Christ is active in his present heavenly ministry.
 - 1 Peter 3:21b-22—“... Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and *is* at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.”
 - Romans 8:34b—“Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who *is* at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”
 - Colossians 3:1—“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ *is, seated* at the right hand of God.”

- Historic interpretations of Acts 7:55-56
 - Ambrose ([letter](#))—"Jesus was standing as his advocate, He was standing as though anxious, that He might help His athlete Stephen in his conflict, He was standing as though ready to crown His martyr. Let Him then be standing for you, that you may not be afraid of Him sitting; for when sitting He judges, as Daniel says: "The thrones were placed, and the books were opened, and the Ancient of days did sit." But in the eighty-first [second] Psalm it is written: "God stood in the congregation of gods, and decideth among the gods." [Psalm 82:1] So then when He sits He judges, when He stands He decides, and He judges concerning the imperfect, but decides among the gods. Let Him stand for you as a defender, as a good shepherd, lest the fierce wolves assault you."
 - Augustine (as [referenced critically by Calvin](#)): Judges sit, advocates stand. Jesus is both our judge and our advocate, and was advocating for Stephen as he was condemned by the people of Jerusalem.
 - Calvin ([commentary](#))
 - Standing and sitting are two Biblical ways of speaking to signify the same thing.
 - "When Christ is said to sit or stand at the right hand of God the Father" it means "that Christ hath all power given him, that he may reign in his Father's stead in that flesh wherein he was humbled, and that he may be next him."
 - Matthew Henry ([commentary](#)): "He is usually said to *sit* there; but Stephen sees him *standing* there,
 - "as one more than ordinarily concerned at present for his suffering servant;
 - "he stood up as a judge to plead his cause against his persecutors . . .
 - "He stands ready to receive him and crown him, and in the mean time to give him a prospect of the joy set before him."
 - Charles Spurgeon ([sermon](#))
 - "One of the old fathers says it was as though the Lord Jesus stood up in horror at the deed which was being done—as though He were about to interpose to help His servant die, or to deliver him out of their hands. He stands up, actively sympathizing with His suffering witness.
 - "Well, Beloved, this is just what we see in Heaven. The Man of Sorrows is alive and sympathizes with His people still! Though raised to the Throne of Glory, He is not forgetful of our shame and sorrow. Think not, O child of earth that the Son of Man has forgotten what temptation means and is now a stranger to human weakness and infirmity! "In all your affliction He is afflicted." He deeply sympathizes with every one of His tried Brothers and Sisters, "and in His measure feels afresh what every member bears." Suppose not that He is an unthoughtful, uncaring spectator of your trials, child of God! Christ has risen from His Throne to assist you! He stands at this moment, in the hour of your extremity, ready to help you. He will send you comfort when you need it, and He will see that your strength shall be to your day. What a sight was this for the dying Stephen! Jesus is living and living with the same love in His heart which He showed on earth—with the same tender sympathy which He manifested among the twelve when He lingered among the sons of men. The brightest point in the vision was this—Stephen saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God."