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*John Gill's*

**A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY**

**Book 5—Chapter 8**

# **OF THE SESSION OF CHRIST AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD**

This follows upon the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ to heaven; it is in this order things stand according to the scriptures; Christ was first raised from the dead; then he went to heaven, and was received up into it; and then sat down at the right hand of God (Eph. 1:20; 1 Pet. 3:22; Mark 16:19). I shall treat this article much in the same manner as the former.

1. First, Show that it was foretold in prophecy that Christ should sit at the right hand of God; hence it may be thought, that in prophetic language, and by anticipation, he is called "the man of God's right hand" (Ps. 80:17), not only because beloved of God, and dear to him as a man's right hand is to him; so Jacob called his youngest son Benjamin, the son of the right hand, because of his great affection to him; nor because Christ would be held and sustained by the right hand of God in the discharge of his mediatorial office (Isa. 42:1) but because when he had done his work on earth, he should be received to heaven, and placed at the right hand of God; of which there is a plain promise and prophecy in Psalm 110:1. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand"; which words are spoken, not of Abraham by Melchizedek, nor by Eliezer the servant of Abraham; not by Melchizedek, for he was greater than Abraham (Heb. 7:6,7), and therefore would not call him his Lord; and though he might be so called by Eliezer, yet he could not say of him, that he was a priest after Melchizedek's order (Heb. 7:4), nor are they said of David; for, as the apostle Peter argues, "David is not ascended into the heavens; but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand", &c. nor indeed could they be said to, or of any man; not of the saints, for

though they sit down together with Christ, their head and representative; and will sit on the same throne with him, and be glorified with him; yet are never said to sit at the right hand of God; nor indeed are they spoken to or of angels, for "to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand?" &c. (Heb. 1:13), but on the contrary, angels, authorities, and powers, are subject to him who sits at the right hand of God (1 Pet. 3:22), and who is the Messiah, Christ, the Son of God, of whom the text in the Psalms is spoken, and was so understood by the ancient Jews, and even by the Jews in Christ's time, as is clear from Matthew 22:42-45 where Christ puts a question to which they could give no answer, but were nonplussed and confounded; but could they have given, or had they known any other sense of the words, they could easily have made answer by denying they belonged to the Messiah, but to some other person, and so have freed themselves from the embarrassment they were in; but they knew that this was the universal and acknowledged sense of their nation. The words were spoken by Jehovah the Father, to his Son, in the everlasting council and covenant of grace; even to him who was David's Adon, or Lord: Christ himself also foretold, that he should sit down at the right hand of God; "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of Power" (Matthew 26:64).

2. Secondly, It is fact; Christ is set down at the right hand of God, and the above prophecies are fulfilled; the evidences of this fact are,

2a. The effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, after Christ had ascended and took his place at the right hand of God. The Spirit was not given until he was glorified in heaven, by his session there at God's right hand; upon which, "having received of the Father, the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear", says the apostle (Acts 2:33). And again, "And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him", on his exaltation at the right hand of God (Acts 5:31,32).

2b. Stephen, the proto-martyr, while he was suffering, was an eyewitness of this; he saw Christ at the right hand of God; and declared to the Jews that stoned him, that he did see him; only with this difference, in all other places Christ is spoken of as sitting; but Stephen saw him standing, at the right hand of God; having risen up, as it were, from his seat, to show his resentment at the usage of his servant; but this circumstance makes no difference, nor creates any objection to the thing itself, which is, Christ's being exalted in human nature, at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55,56). I shall next,

3. Thirdly, Endeavour to explain this article, and show what is meant by it; what by the right hand of God; and what by sitting at it; how long Christ will sit there; and what the use and benefits of his session there are to his people.

3a. First, What is meant by the right hand of God, at which Christ is said to sit. This is variously expressed; sometimes by the right hand of the throne of God; sometimes by the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; and elsewhere, by the

right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 12:2; 8:1 1:3). By "Majesty", as it is in some of these places, is meant God himself; as is clear from others, to whom majesty, grandeur, and glory belong; with whom is terrible majesty; it is not only before him, but he is clothed with it. By his throne, heaven is sometimes meant, where he more especially displays his majesty and glory; and may be put for him that sits upon it; and he, and that, are said to be on high, in the heavens, in heavenly places; for though God is everywhere, yet, as now observed, his majesty and glory are most conspicuous in heaven; and here the human nature of Christ is; who in it, is at God's right hand, being in a certain place, where he is, and will continue till his second coming, and from whence he is expected: and the right hand of God is not to be taken in a literal sense, but figuratively, and signifies the power of God, and the exertion of that (Ps 89:13; 118:16), and is such a glorious perfection of God, that it is sometimes put for God himself; and even when this article of Christ's session at his right hand is expressed (Matthew 26:64).

**3b. Secondly, What is meant by Christ's sitting at God's right hand.**

**3b1.** It is expressive of great honour and dignity; the allusion is to kings and great personages, who, to their favorites, and to whom they would do an honour, when they come into their presence, place them at their right hand; so Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, when she came with a petition to him, he caused her to sit on a seat on his right hand (1 Kings 2:19), in allusion to which, the queen, the church, is said to stand on the right hand of Christ (Ps. 45:9 see also Matthew 20:21). This supposes such a person, next in honour and dignity to the king; as Christ, under this consideration, is to the Majesty on high, on whose right hand he sits; and therefore is not to be understood with respect to his divine nature, abstractly considered, or as a divine Person; for as such he is Jehovah's fellow, who thought it no robbery to be equal with God: nor with respect to his human nature merely, and of any communication of the divine perfections to it; for though the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in him, yet this is not communicated to, or transfused into his human nature, as to make that omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, or equal to God, or give it a right to sit on his right hand; but this is to be understood of him as Mediator, with respect to both natures; who, in that office capacity, is inferior to his Father, and his Father greater than he; since the power in heaven and in earth he has, is given to him by him, and received from him; and he is made subject to him, that put all things under him, by placing him at his right hand; where he is next unto him, in his office as Mediator.

**3b2.** It is expressive of his government and dominion over all; for this phrase of sitting at the right hand of God is explained by reigning or ruling; for it follows, in the original text, as explanative of it; "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies" (Ps. 110:2), and so the apostle interprets it, in (1 Cor. 15:25). Now this government and dominion is not to be understood of what is natural to Christ, and common to him, with the other two divine Persons; the kingdom of nature and providence equally belongs to him, as to his divine Father, of whom he says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"; jointly with him, having the same power, operation, and

influence in all things, he has (John 5:17; Ps. 22:28), but of his mediatorial kingdom and government; which dominion, glory, and kingdom, were given to him, and received from the Ancient of days; a delegated kingdom, for the administration of which he is accountable to his Father, and will deliver it up to him, when completed; in respect of which he may be said to sit at the right hand of God, and to be next unto him in power and authority (Dan. 7:14; Luke 19:12; 1 Cor. 15:28), and yet superior to all created beings, of the highest form, and of the greatest name, which are all subject to him (Eph. 1:20,21; Phil. 2:9,10; 1 Pet. 3:22).

3b3. Sitting at the right hand of God, supposes Christ has done his work, and that to satisfaction, and with acceptance: as the work of redemption, which was given him, and he undertook, and came to work out, and has finished; upon which he "entered in once into the holy place"; that is, into heaven (Heb 9:12), and the work of making atonement for sin, reconciliation for iniquity, and full satisfaction for it; which was cut out in council and covenant for him, and he agreed to do; and having done it, "sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb 1:3; 10:12). And also the work of bringing in an everlasting righteousness, for the justification of his people: this he engaged to do, and for this end came into the world, and is become the end of the law for righteousness, to everyone that believes; and being raised from the dead for our justification, and gone to heaven, "is at the right hand of God"; which the apostle observes for the strengthening of his own faith, and the faith of others, with respect to their full acquittance, and complete justification before God (Rom. 4:25; 8:33,34). All which, and more, he has done with acceptance: God is well pleased with his righteousness, because the law is by it magnified, and made honorable: his sacrifice is of a sweet smelling savour to God: and all being done he agreed to do, to entire satisfaction, he was received up into heaven with a welcome; and, as a token of it, placed at God's right hand.

3b4. Sitting at God's right hand, supposes ease and rest from labour; for Christ, upon his resurrection, and ascension to heaven, came into the presence of God; in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore; and when he was made glad with the light of his countenance; and when having entered into his rest, he ceased from his own works, as God did from his at creation, (Ps. 16:11; Heb. 4:10). Not that Christ ceased to act for his people in heaven, when set down at the right hand of God; for he passed into the heavens for them, for their service and good; he entered as the forerunner for them, and appears in the presence of God for them; and, as their high priest, transacts all affairs for them, and ever lives to make intercession for them: but he ceases now from his toilsome and laborious work; for though it was his Father's business, and which he voluntarily engaged in, and it was his meat and drink to do; yet it was very fatiguing, not merely in going about continually to do good to the bodies and souls of men; but in the labour and travail of his soul, when he bore the wrath of God, and endured the curse of the law, in his sufferings and death: and now, being freed and eased from all this, he sits down, and looks with pleasure on all that he has done; as God, when he had finished the works of creation, took a survey of them, and saw they were all very good, and then rested from his works; so Christ, with pleasure,

sits and sees the travail of his soul, the blessings of grace, through his blood, applied to his people; and a continued succession of a seed to serve him, who, ere long, will be all with him where he is, and behold his glory; which is the joy that was set before him when he suffered for them.

**3b5. Sitting denotes continuance; Christ sits as a priest upon his throne, and abides continually: the priests under the law did not abide continually, by reason of death; but Christ lives for ever, and has an unchangeable priesthood; they stood daily offering the same sacrifices, because sin was not effectually put away by them; but Christ, by one offering, has made full and perfect expiation for sin; and therefore is set down, and continues to do the other part of his priestly office as an intercessor; and to see the efficacy of his sacrifice take place: he also sits King for ever; his throne is for ever and ever; and his kingdom an everlasting kingdom, of which, and the peace thereof, there shall be no end. Which leads,**

**3c. Thirdly, To observe how long Christ will sit at the right hand of God; namely, "until all enemies are put under his feet, and made his footstool". It began at his ascension to heaven, and not before; the Word and Son of God was with God in the beginning from all eternity; and was co-eternal with him, and hid a glory with him before the world was; but he is never said to sit at the right hand of God till after his incarnation, death, resurrection from the dead, and ascension to heaven; then, and not before, he took his place at the right hand of God, where he will continue till his second coming, when all enemies shall be subdued under him. Some are subdued already; as sin, which is made an end of; the devil, who is destroyed; and the world, which is overcome by him: others remain to be destroyed; all, as yet, are not put under him, as the man of sin, and son of perdition, who will be destroyed with the breath of his mouth; the antichristian kings, who will be gathered to the battle at Armageddon and slain; the beast, and the false prophet, who will be cast into the burning lake: now Christ sits and reigns till all these are vanquished, and the last enemy destroyed, which is death.**

**3d. Fourthly, The use of Christ's session at the right hand of God to his people, and the benefits and blessings arising from thence to them, are,**

**3d1. Protection from all their enemies. Being raised, and set down at the right hand of God, he has a name, power, and authority, over all principalities and powers, might and dominion in this world and that to come; all things are put under his feet, and he is given to be an head over all things to the church; all are put into his hands, to subserve his own interest, and the interest of his people; he has all power in heaven and in earth given him, and which he uses for their good, and for the protection of them from all evil, (Eph 1:20,21,22: Matthew 28:18).**

**3d2. In consequence of this is, freedom from fear of all enemies; some are destroyed already; those that remain will be; so that there is nothing to be feared from them by those that believe in Jesus (1 Cor. 15:25-27).**

**3d3. The perpetual and prevalent intercession of Christ, on the behalf of his chosen ones, is another benefit arising from his session at the right hand of God; there he sits as their high priest; and being made higher than the heavens, ever lives to make intercession for them, by representing their persons, presenting their petitions, and pleading their cause; though Satan sometimes stands at their right hand to resist and accuse them; Christ sits at the right hand of God as their advocate with the Father, to rebuke him, and answer to, and remove his charges; in a view of which, every saint may say with the apostle; "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" (Rom. 8:33,34).**

**3d4. Hence great encouragement to come with boldness and freedom to the throne of grace; since we have such an high priest who is passed into the heavens for us, is our forerunner for us entered, appears in the presence of God for us, is on the throne of glory, and at the right hand of God, to speak a good word for us; and this serves to draw up our hearts heavenwards, to seek things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; and to set our affections on things in heaven, and not on things on earth, (Heb. 4:14,16; Col. 3:1,2).**

**3d5. This raises the expectation of the saints, with respect to Christ's second coming, and gives them assurance of it; Christ sits at the right hand of God, expecting till his enemies be made his footstool; and they look for and expect him from heaven, who is gone thither to prepare a place for them; and has assured them, that he will come again, and take them to himself, that where he is they may be also, and sit upon the same throne, and be for ever with him, (Heb. 10:12,13; Phil. 3:20; John 14:2,3; Rev. 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:16,18). Another branch of Christ's exaltation lies in his second coming to judgment, when he will come in great glory. But that I shall reserve to treat of in a more proper place.**