Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor

***Lutheran Service Book* 534** | study by John G. Fleischmann

Introduction

Jesus is our King. That is the emphasis of the readings, prayers and hymns for the Last Sunday of the Church Year.

The Explanation to the Small Catechism reminds us that there are three kingdoms over which our Lord reigns: the kingdom of power, which is the world; the kingdom of grace, which is the Church; and the kingdom of glory, which is heaven (*Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation,* Question 212).

Centered on the Holy Eucharist, this hymn praises Jesus for His reign in the Church through the Means of Grace and His reign at the right hand of God in heaven.

- How is Jesus present in the world today?
- When is a person brought into the kingdom of grace from the kingdom of power?
- How does Jesus reign in the Church today?
- When does the kingdom of grace become the kingdom of glory? How does this tie in with the theme of the Last Sunday of the Church Year?

Exploring the Scriptures

This hymn uses the wonderful worship imagery that is given to the Church in the Book of Revelation.

Read Rev. 1:5–6.

- What has God made us to be? Explain.
- What does the phrase "to him be glory and dominion forever and ever" mean?

Read Rev. 5:11–14. Here we have an illustration of the antiphonal worship that takes place in heaven.

- What is Jesus worthy to receive?
- Why?
- Where in the liturgy do we sing these words?

Read Rev. 7:9–17. The heavenly worship continues.

- Who is worshiping the Lamb?
- Who are those in white robes? Why are they singled out?
- What are the promises given about the kingdom of glory? What will God ultimately do?

Read Col. 1:13–20, the Epistle for this day.

- What has Jesus done for us (v. 13)?
- What do we learn about Jesus in verses 15 and 16?
- Of which kingdom do verses 17 and 18 speak?
- How did Jesus reconcile all things to Himself?

Exploring the Hymn

Background

This hymn was penned by the Rev. George Hugh Bourne (1840–1925), an Anglican priest and warden of St. Edmund's School at Salisbury.

The author desired to provide students with post-Communion hymns that would delve into the Eucharistic mystery. "Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor" was one of seven hymns included in a private publication in 1874. It was first offered to the Church in 1889 in the supplement to *Hymns Ancient and Modern*.

The imagery used by Bourne links the glories of heaven to the Eucharist on the altar in a beautiful way.

- How do hymns help you to better understand deep theological and biblical truths?
- As you read the stanzas of this hymn, how do they build upon each other?

Text

Stanza 1 begins by acknowledging that the Christ of Holy Communion is the same Christ who rose and is now reigning in heaven.

- What are the things that Jesus does for the Church at God's right hand now?
- How does Jesus lift up your head?
- What is the connection between Holy Communion and the phrase "Jesus, true and living bread"?

Stanza 2 makes the connection between the bread and wine on the altar and Jesus' lowly birth at Bethlehem. To the world, neither are spectacular or miraculous: the birth of a child; common bread and wine.

However, with the Word of God, bread and wine on the altar are no mere forms! They are the very body and blood of Jesus, given and shed for us!

- How do the angels hail Jesus here?
- What is the significance of the phrase "Branch and flow'r of Jesse's stem"?
- What part of the Communion liturgy speaks of us joining our voices with the angels?

Stanza 3 takes us to *the* altar: the cross. It is there that the Paschal Lamb was slain for the redemption of the world.

- What comfort does the phrase "In its fullness undiminished / Shall forevermore remain" bring to you?
- According to the last line of this stanza, what is the effect of this once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus? See Heb. 10:10.

Stanza 4 makes the connection between the wilderness wandering of the children of Israel, the reign of Christ in heaven, and the lowly bread and wine on the altar.

- Read 1 Cor. 10:1–4. How did the Lord provide for the children of Israel?
- Read John 6:31–34. How does Jesus feed us in our journey to heaven?
- Read Ex. 17:1–7. How did God provide water for the children of Israel?
- How is Jesus the "Stricken rock with streaming side"?

This final stanza culminates with the heavenly worship of the Lord by all creation.

- How do we worship "with loud hosanna" as we celebrate the Eucharist?
- What certainty does the phrase "Ris'n, ascended, glorified" bring to you as you receive Holy Communion?

Making the Connection

This powerful hymn draws out the biblical imagery of heavenly worship and applies it to the Holy Eucharist.

As each stanza builds on the previous stanza, the words crescendo to the point where one can almost hear the angels joining their voices!

- How do the "praise songs" of today differ from the worship in Revelation and the words of this hymn?
- How does this hymn assist you in better understanding what takes place as you receive Holy Communion?

In Closing

- Sing or read aloud together *LSB* 534.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, You reign among us by the preaching of Your cross. Forgive Your people their offenses that we, being governed by Your bountiful goodness, may enter at last into Your eternal paradise; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (Collect for Proper 29C).