

El Shaddai and Christ Crucified 03, The Heavens Opened

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Jesus Stood Up to Read and Sat Down

Luke 4:16-22 (NKJV) 16 So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up<450> to read. 17 And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: 18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; 19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” 20 Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” 22 So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, “Is this not Joseph’s son?”

Strong’s Greek Dictionary of the NT: “stood up” <450>

450. ἀνίστημι anistemi, an-is'-tay-mee; from 303 and 2476; to stand up (literal or figurative, transitive or intransitive): — arise, lift up, raise up (again), rise (again), stand up(-right).

(DSB) William Barclay’s Daily Study Bible: Luke 4:16

...Luke 4:20 says that Jesus sat down. That gives us the impression that he was finished. In point of fact it means that he was about to start, because the speaker gave the address seated and Rabbis taught sitting down. (compare our own phrase, a professor’s chair).

Adam Clarke’s Commentary: Luke 4:16

Stood up for to read. The Jews, in general, sat while they taught or commented on the Sacred Writings, or the traditions of the elders; but when they read either the law or the prophets they invariably stood up: it was not lawful for them even to lean against any thing while employed in reading.

(ICC-NT) The International Critical Commentary (NT): Luke 4:16

[ἀνέστη ἀναγνῶναι] Standing to read was the usual practice, excepting when the Book of Esther was read at the Feast of Purim: then the reader might sit. Christ’s standing up indicated that He had been asked to read, or was ready to do so. This is the only occasion on which we are told that Jesus read.

The Four Fold Gospel Commentary: Luke 4:16

19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. [The prophecy set forth in physical terms what Jesus should perform in both the physical and spiritual realms. The prophecy closes with a reference to the jubilee year, which, being a time of liberation, forgiveness, and fresh starts, was a type of Christ’s ministry and kingdom.] **20 And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant** [This officer corresponded to our sexton. Part of this duty was to take charge of the synagogue rolls], **and sat down** [Reader and congregation both stood during the reading; then, usually, both sat down to hear the passage explained. They stood out of reverence for God’s word]...

(IVP-NB) New Bible Commentary: Luke 4:16

4:16-30 Jesus teaches at Nazareth (cf. Mt. 13:53-58; Mk. 6:1-6). Luke has probably brought forward this incident ahead of its historical position (see Mk. 6:1-6) because it provided an ideal opening summary of the message of Jesus. The synagogue service consisted of prayers, readings from the law and prophets and a sermon. The leader of the service stood to pray and read, but sat to teach. Any competent person present could be invited to take part (*cf.* Acts 13:15). There was at this time a set list of readings for the ‘first lesson’ from the law, but there was probably freedom of choice in the ‘second lesson’ from the prophets. Jesus read from Is. 61:1-2 and gave a discourse (which is obviously much abbreviated here) concerning the fulfilment of this prophecy. He stressed the note of *present* fulfilment: what the prophet had foretold centuries before was now coming true. He taught that the prophecy had a *personal* fulfilment: the one anointed with the Spirit was Jesus himself. He also indicated that it was a *gracious* fulfilment: the era of God’s salvation had now arrived. It may be significant that Jesus did not go on to complete the quotation with its reference to ‘the day of vengeance of our God’. The text included a phrase from Is. 58:6, probably included by the author because of its obvious fitness to describe the ministry of Jesus. The various acts ascribed to the speaker in the prophecy are to be interpreted primarily spiritually rather than literally (*cf.* Lk. 1:46-55). The *year of the Lord’s favour* is the time graciously chosen by him to show favour to his people; it reflects the description of the ‘year of jubilee’ when debts are forgiven.

(IVP-NT) NT Bible Background Commentary: Luke 4:16

4:16. The people would have known that Jesus was devout and skilled in Hebrew from his previous readings in his hometown synagogue. One customarily sat while expounding Scripture (Mt 5:1) but stood while reading it.

4:17. Synagogues later followed regular lectionary readings, but in this period readers had more freedom to choose the reading from the Prophets; even later, readers in the Prophets were allowed to “skip” passages. The synagogue attendant (*chazan*—v. 20) presumably chose which book to read (different books of the Old Testament were on different scrolls). “Opening” the book meant unrolling the Hebrew scroll to the right place.

4:20. Teachers normally sat to expound Scripture. ...

4:21-22. Immediacy (“today”; cf. 2:11; 19:5, 9; 23:43) is the initial key to the coming offense; the text Jesus reads is supposed to be fulfilled in the messianic era, and the inhabitants of Nazareth saw neither Messiah nor messianic era before them. Because they lived only four miles from Sepphoris, they were well aware of how the Romans had destroyed that Galilean capital after a messianic-style revolt in A.D. 6; that this region was thereafter cautious about messianic announcements is clear from the fact that the rebuilt Sepphoris did not join in the later revolt of A.D. 66.

[*He stood up to read.*] That we may frame the better judgment of this action of our Saviour's, let us a little look into the customs of the synagogue: —

I. They read *standing up*. *Piske*: and Rabbenu Asher; “They do not read in the law otherwise than *standing up*. Nay, it is unlawful for him that readeth to lean upon any thing. Whence comes it that he that readeth in the law is bound to *stand up*? Rabb Abhu saith, Because the Scripture saith, Do thou stand by me. Nor ought any one to lean any way, as it is in the *Jerusalem*. R. Samuel Bar Isaac going into a synagogue found one expounding and leaning against a pillar. He saith to him, This is not lawful: for as the law was given with reverence, so are we to handle it with reverence too.”

Deuteronomy 5:23-28 (NKJV) 23 “So it was, when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. 24 And you said: ‘Surely the Lord our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God speaks with man; yet he still lives. 25 Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the Lord our God anymore, then we shall die. 26 For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? 27 You go near and hear all that the Lord our God may say, and tell us all that the Lord our God says to you, and we will hear and do it.’ 28 “Then the Lord heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the Lord said to me: ‘I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken.

Deuteronomy 5:29-31 (NKJV) 29 Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever! 30 Go and say to them, “Return to your tents.” 31 But as for you, stand here by Me, and I will speak to you all the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe [them] in the land which I am giving them to possess.’

They preferred the *Law* before the *Prophets*, and the *Law* and the *Prophets* above the *Hagiographa*, or *holy writings*: and yet they yielded that honour to the *Prophets*, that even they should not be read but standing up. Whence that is particular which they say concerning the Book of Esther, “A man may read out of the Book of Esther, either standing or sitting. But not so out of the law.” Christ in this followed the custom of the synagogue, in that while he read the Law he stood up, while he taught it he sat down.

II. He that read in the *Prophets* was called *Maphtir*; and was appointed to that office by the ruler of the synagogue.

...

It is probable that Christ did at this time offer himself as a *Maphtir*, or as one that would read in the *Prophets*, and preach upon what he read; not before hand appointed to it by the ruler of the synagogue, but rather approved of when he had offered himself. For those of Nazareth had heard of some miracles which he had wrought at Capernaum, verse 23: and therefore no wonder if they were very desirous to hear something from him answerable to those great things he had done.

Tabernacles, The Holy Spirit, & Extreme Thankful Rejoicing

John 7:37-39 (NKJV) 37 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood²⁴⁷⁶ and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." 39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

(DSB) William Barclay's Daily Study Bible: John 7:37

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATER (Joh 7:37-44)

All the events of this chapter took place during the Festival of Tabernacles; and properly to understand them we must know the significance, and at least some of the ritual of that Festival.

The Festival of Tabernacles or Booths was the third of the trio of great Jewish Festivals, attendance at which was compulsory for all adult male Jews who lived within fifteen miles of Jerusalem--the Passover, the Festival of Pentecost, and the Festival of Tabernacles. It fell on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, that is, about 15th October. Like all the great Jewish festivals it had a double significance.

First, it had an historical significance. It received its name from the fact that all through it people left their houses and lived in little booths. During the Festival the booths sprang up everywhere, on the flat roofs of the houses, in the streets, in the city squares, in the gardens, and even in the very courts of the Temple. The law laid it down that the booths must not be permanent structures but built specially for the occasion. Their walls were made of branches and fronds, and had to be such that they would give protection from the weather but not shut out the sun. The roof had to be thatched, but the thatching had to be wide enough for the stars to be seen at night. The historical significance of all this was to remind the people in unforgettable fashion that once they had been homeless wanderers in the desert without a roof over their heads (Lev 23:40-43). Its purpose was "that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." Originally it lasted seven days, but by the time of Jesus an eighth day had been added.

Second, it had an agricultural significance. It was supremely a harvest-thanksgiving festival. It is sometimes called the Festival of the Ingathering (Exo 23:16; Exo 34:22); and it was the most popular festival of all. For that reason it was sometimes called simply The Feast (1Ki 8:2), and sometimes The Festival of the Lord (Lev 23:39). It stood out above all others. The people called it "the season of our gladness," for it marked the ingathering of all the harvests, since by this time the barley, the wheat, and the grapes were all safely gathered in. As the law had it, it was to be celebrated "at the end of the year when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labour" (Exo 23:16); it was to be kept "when you make your ingathering from your threshing floor and your wine press" (Deu 16:13; Deu 16:16). It was not only thanksgiving for one harvest; it was glad thanksgiving for all the bounty of nature which made life possible and living happy. In Zechariah's dream of the new world it was this festival which was to be celebrated everywhere (Zec 14:16-18). Josephus called it "the holiest and the greatest festival among the Jews" (Antiquities of the Jews, 3: 10: 4). It was not only a time for the rich; it was laid down that the servant, the stranger, the widow and the poor were all to share in the universal joy.

One particular ceremony was connected with it. The worshippers were told to take "the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook" (Lev 23:40). The Sadducees said that was a description of the material out of which the booths had to be built; the Pharisees said it was a description of the things the worshippers had to bring with them when they came

to the Temple. Naturally the people accepted the interpretation of the Pharisees, for it gave them a vivid ceremony in which to participate.

This special ceremony is very closely connected with this passage and with the words of Jesus. Quite certainly he spoke with it in his mind, and possibly even with it as an immediate background. Each day of the festival the people came with their palms and their willows to the Temple; with them they formed a kind of screen or roof and marched round the great altar. At the same time a priest took a golden pitcher which held three logs--that is, about two pints--and went down to the Pool of Siloam and filled it with water. It was carried back through the Water Gate while the people recited Isa 12:3 : "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." The water was carried up to the Temple altar and poured out as an offering to God. While this was being done The Hallel--that is, Psa 113:1-9; Psa 114:1-8; Psa 115:1-18; Psa 116:1-19; Psa 117:1-2; Psa 118:1-29 --was sung to the accompaniment of flutes by the Levite choir. When they came to the words, "O give thanks to the Lord" (Psa 118:1), and again to the words, "O work now then salvation" (Psa 118:25), and finally to the closing words, "O give thanks to the Lord" (Psa 118:29), the worshippers shouted and waved their palms towards the altar. The whole dramatic ceremony was a vivid thanksgiving for God's good gift of water and an acted prayer for rain, and a memory of the water which sprang from the rock when they travelled through the wilderness. On the last day the ceremony was doubly impressive for they marched seven times round the altar in memory of the sevenfold circuit round the walls of Jericho, whereby the walls fell down and the city was taken.

Against this background and perhaps at that very moment, Jesus' voice rang out: "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink." It is as if Jesus said: "You are thanking and glorifying God for the water which quenches the thirst of your bodies. Come to me if you want water which will quench the thirst of your soul." He was using that dramatic moment to turn men's thoughts to the thirst for God and the eternal things.

(JFB) Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Commentary: John 7:37-39

the last day, that great day of the feast — the eighth (Lev 23:39). It was a sabbath, the last feast day of the year, and distinguished by very remarkable ceremonies. "The generally joyous character of this feast broke out on this day into loud jubilation, particularly at the solemn moment when the priest, as was done on every day of this festival, brought forth, in golden vessels, water from the stream of Siloah, which flowed under the temple-mountain, and solemnly poured it upon the altar. Then the words of Isa 12:3 were sung, With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of Salvation, and thus the symbolical reference of this act, intimated in Joh 7:39, was expressed" [Olshausen]. So ecstatic was the joy with which this ceremony was performed - accompanied with sound of trumpets - that it used to be said, "Whoever had not witnessed it had never seen rejoicing at all" [Lightfoot].

Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary: John 7:37-39

On each day of the feast, the people came with palm branches and marched around the great altar. A priest took a golden pitcher filled with water from the Pool of Siloam, carried it to the temple, and poured it on the altar as an offering to God. This dramatic ceremony was a memorial of the water that flowed from the rock when the Israelites traveled through the wilderness. On the last day of the feast, the people marched seven times around the altar in memory of the seven circuits around the walls of Jericho. Perhaps at the very moment that the priest was pouring water on the altar, Jesus' voice rang out: If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

Robertson's NT Word Pictures: John 7:37

Now on the last day (*en de tēi eschatēi hēmerāi*). The eighth day which was “an holy convocation,” kept as a Sabbath (Lev 23:36), apparently observed as a memorial of the entrance into Canaan, hence “the great day of the feast” (*tēi megalēi tēs heortēs*).

Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament: John 7:37

The last day

The eighth, the close of the whole festival, and kept as a Sabbath (Lev 23:36). It was called *the Day of the Great Hosanna*, because a circuit was made seven times round the altar with “Hosanna;” also *the Day of Willows*, and *the Day of Beating the Branches*, because all the leaves were shaken off the willow-boughs, and the palm branches beaten in pieces by the side of the altar. Every morning, after the sacrifice, the people, led by a priest, repaired to the Fountain of Siloam, where the priest filled a golden pitcher, and brought it back to the temple amid music and joyful shouts. Advancing to the altar of burnt-offering, at the cry of the people, “Lift up thy hand!” he emptied the pitcher toward the west, and toward the east a cup of wine, while the people chanted, “With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” It is not certain that this libation was made on the eighth day, but there can be no doubt that the following words of the Lord had reference to that ceremony.

Believer's Bible Commentary (William McDonald): Jn 7:37

D. The Promise of the Holy Spirit (7:37-39)

7:37 Though not mentioned in the OT, the Jews had a ceremony of carrying water from the Pool of Siloam and pouring it into a silver basin by the altar of burnt offering for each of the first seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles. On the eighth day, this was not done, which made Christ's offer of the water of eternal life even more startling. The Jewish people had gone through this religious observance, and yet their hearts were not satisfied because they had not truly understood the deep meaning of the feast. Just before they departed for their homes, **on the last day, that great day of the feast Jesus stood and cried** out to them. He invited them to **come** to Him for spiritual satisfaction. Pay particular attention to the words. His invitation was extended to **anyone**. His gospel was a universal gospel. There was no one who could not be saved if he would simply come to Christ.

But notice the condition. The Scripture says, **“If anyone thirsts.”** “Thirst” here speaks of spiritual need. Unless a person knows he is a sinner, he will never want to be saved. Unless he realizes he is lost, he will never desire to be found. Unless one is conscious of a great spiritual lack in his life, he will never want to go to the Lord to have that need supplied. The Savior invited the thirsting soul to come to Him—not to the church, the preacher, the waters of baptism, or the Lord's Table. Jesus said, **“Let him come to Me.”** No one or nothing else will do. **“Let him come to Me and drink.”** To “drink” here means to appropriate Christ for oneself. It means to trust Him as Lord and Savior. It means to take Him into our lives as we would take a glass of water into our bodies.

The Teacher's Bible Commentary: John 7:37

Jesus would not remain in hiding. He boldly disputed with his accusers. And on the last great day of the feast he made another startling claim. One of the [p. 674] features of the worship had been the daily pouring out of the drink offering. With that in his mind, Jesus cried out, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (v. 37). With courage he declared that God would no more honor the ceremonies of the ancient wells of salvation. Henceforth there was to be a new source of the Water of life. It would be in him.

Rivers of Water

7:37. The “last day” of the Feast of Tabernacles (7:2) probably refers to the eighth day. For at least the first seven days of the feast, priests marched in procession from the Pool of Siloam to the temple and poured out water at the base of the altar. Pilgrims to the feast watched this ritual, which Jews throughout the Roman world thus knew; it was even commemorated on souvenir jars they could take home with them.

7:38. The public reading of Scripture at this feast included the one passage in the Prophets that emphasized this feast, Zechariah 14, which was interpreted in conjunction with Ezekiel 47. Together these texts taught that rivers of living water would flow forth from the temple (in Jewish teaching, at the very center of the earth, from the foundation stone of the temple), bringing life to all the earth. The water-drawing ceremony (7:37) (originally meant to secure rain) pointed toward this hope.

Because the water of verse 38 flows to and not from the believer (v. 39), 7:37-38 may be punctuated to read: “If anyone thirsts, let this one come to me; and let whoever believes in me drink. As the Scripture says ...” (The original manuscripts had no punctuation.) Verse 38 may thus declare that Jesus fulfills the Scriptures read at the feast, as the foundation stone of a new temple, the source of the water of life (cf. 19:34; Rev 22:1).

7:39. Most of Judaism did not believe that the Spirit was prophetically active in their own time but expected the full outpouring of the Spirit in the messianic age or the world to come. Water usually symbolized Torah (law) or wisdom in Jewish texts, but John follows Old Testament precedent in using it for the Spirit (Is 44:3; Ezek 36:24-27; Joel 2:28).

John 9:1-12

Healing the Blind

9:7. It is not clear whether “Siloam” meant “sent,” but Greek teachers as well as Jewish teachers from Philo to the rabbis commonly made arguments based on wordplays, which were often based on fanciful etymologies.

Although Siloam was used as a water supply and for baptizing converts to Judaism, it has more direct significance here. This was probably still the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (7:2, 37), and the water of Siloam was the sacred water used for this feast (see comment on 7:37-38). Here Jesus employs the ritual water (cf. 2:6; 3:5), but it works only because the man is “sent.”

(Hermeneia NT-20) A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (NT): John 7:37

...This water was brought back to the temple, amidst loud jubilation and accompanied by music; there, the water together with a jug of wine were poured into silver bowls brought to the altar for that express purpose and thence poured into the ground via tubes. The saying mentioned in the Mishnah is related to the first part of this ritual: Whoever has not seen the joy of drawing water has never experienced joy in his life.” ...

(TJL-Ashland) Ashland Theological Journal: John 7:37

7. Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:33–43)

...

Both the 1st day (15th of Tishri) and this 8th day of Tabernacles (22nd) were called “a holy convocation” (**miqra qodesh**) in which no laborious work was done (Lev. 23:35, 36), and each was called “a Sabbath rest” (**shabbathon**, vs. 39). The significance of Tabernacles is sabbatical REST. Just as Tabernacles follows Yom Kippur, so our eternal rest will follow our redemption from judgment. Just as the Day of Atonement dealt with the **guilt and penalty** of sin, so our eternal rest in the tabernacles the Lord is preparing for us in heaven will be free from the **presence and effect** of sin. We will be saved to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25). We will have made our exodus from Satan’s tyranny over this world to dwell each one in the garden mansions of the Promised Land. This is the ultimate sabbath, resting in the rest of the Lord. God since Day Seven of creation has been in His creation rest (note that there is no refrain in Gen. 2:3, “And there was evening and there was morning, the seventh day”). He invites man on a weekly basis to taste of this rest of God. Our basic text for this survey of the feasts begins with the weekly sabbath (Lev. 23:1–3), and ends with the most sabbatical [ATJ 10 (1977) p. 13] of all feasts: the seven-day tabernacle-rest of the seventh month consummating the seven feasts. Even the offerings of Tabernacles are divinely engineered to descend from the first to the seventh day by means of daily one less bullock from thirteen down to seven victims on the seventh day (Num. 29:13, 32). This remarkable sabbatical numeration is preceded and heralded not only by the weekly sabbath, but by Unleavened Bread lasting for seven days, by Pentecost being seven weeks after First Fruits, and by a seven-month inclusive period from Nisan to Tishri which God has ordained for all the feasts, which period witnesses seven holy convocations (two for each of Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles; one for each of Pentecost, Trumpets and Atonement). Outside the feast-system of one sabbath day during the week, and one sabbath week during the yearly feast of Tabernacles, there is, in addition, one sabbath year during the sabbatical seven-year cycle. Yet Scripture goes from glory to surpassing glory, from the holy place to the most holy place, from perfection to greater perfection, from seven to eight. The principle of seven-yea-eight, the day after the sabbath, is encountered many times: completed creation began its cycles on the day after the sabbath of God; Passover plus Unleavened Bread lasted for eight days; the **terminus a quo** for Pentecost is on the day after the sabbath; Pentecost is the 50th day ($7 \times 7 + 1$); Tabernacles is eight days; its **first** and its **eighth** day are called a **sabbath** rest; jubilee is the 50th year ($7 \times 7 + 1$); Jesus arose from the dead on the day after the sabbath; the Christian church worships on the day after the sabbath, resurrection day, the Lord’s day, observing in Him a sabbath rest over sin and death; and finally, “There remains therefore a sabbath rest (**sabbatismos**) for the people of God” (Heb. 4:9), for God is still in His sabbath rest of Seven-Yea-Eight, and invites all of His creation who trust in the finished work of Christ to celebrate an unending continuum of Creation-Yea-Neocreation Days with Him in glory.

(BibSac 2012) Bibliotheca Sacra Theological Journal: John 7:37

...But on a par with God, and an equal worthy object of faith is Jesus. In fact, all of the examples of πιστεύειν εἰς in John have Jesus as the object with the exception of the one mentioned above (14:1). This, indeed, was the purpose of the Fourth Evangelist, namely to get men to put their personal trust in Jesus. This was revolutionary to the Jewish mind trained by the Torah with the great Shema as one of its leading themes, but it was not unreasonable as John explained it. For this Jesus, although He participated in human social functions, although He could become weary from a journey like all other human beings, and although He became hungry and thirsty as we, yet actually He was the eternal Logos made flesh (1:14). He was God (1:2), the Creator (1:3), Light (1:4), Life (1:4), the Gift of God (3:16), Living Water (4:10), Life-giving Bread (6:35), the Source of Satisfaction (7:37–38), the True and Living Way (14:6), etc., consequently a worthy object of faith.