

# Luke 4:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

## Analysis

**And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down.**  
**And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.** Jesus concludes the reading with formal liturgical actions: ptuxas to biblion (πτύξας τὸ βιβλίον, closing/rolling up the scroll), He gave it again to the minister (apodous tō hypēretē, ἀποδοὺς τῷ ὑπηρέτῃ, returning it to the attendant), then **sat down** (ekathisen, ἐκάθισεν). In synagogue custom, readers stood to read Scripture but sat to teach—the seated position indicated authoritative instruction was about to begin.

The scene's dramatic tension peaks: **the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him** (kai pantōn hoi ophthalmoi...ēsan atenizontes autō, καὶ πάντων οἱ ὄφθαλμοὶ...ἔσαν ἀτενίζοντες αὐτῷ). The verb atenizō (ἀτενίζω) means to gaze intently, stare fixedly. Complete attention focused on Jesus—they sensed something momentous was about to occur. The hometown crowd knew Him as Joseph's son (v. 22); now He had read a messianic prophecy. What would He say? The stage is set for His explosive claim: 'This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears' (v. 21).

## Historical Context

Synagogue teaching followed the reading—the reader would sit and expound the text just read, applying it to the congregation. The rabbi's seat symbolized

teaching authority (Matthew 23:2). Jesus' sitting signaled He would now interpret Isaiah 61:1-2. The congregation's rapt attention reflects both Jesus' growing fame (v. 14-15) and their recognition that He had selected a profoundly significant messianic text. Nazareth's residents had known Jesus from childhood—watching Joseph's son claim to fulfill Isaiah's messianic prophecy would be shocking. Their initial wonder (v. 22) would turn to murderous rage when Jesus confronted their unbelief and cited examples of Gentiles receiving God's blessing (v. 25-29). This scene inaugurates Jesus' public ministry and establishes the pattern of initial acceptance followed by rejection.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. What does Jesus' sitting to teach signify about His authority to interpret and apply Scripture?
2. How does the congregation's fixed attention illustrate the power of God's Word to command focus and demand response?
3. Why does familiarity with Jesus ('Is not this Joseph's son?') often create obstacles to recognizing His true identity and mission?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ πτύξας τὸ βιβλίον ἀποδοὺς τῷ ὑπηρέτῃ  
And he closed the book and he gave it again to the minister  
G2532 G4428 G3588 G975 G591 G3588 G5257

ἐκάθισεν· καὶ πάντων ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ οἱ ὄφθαλμοὶ<sup>1</sup>  
and sat down And of all them in the synagogue the eyes  
G2523 G2532 G3956 G1722 G3588 G4864 G3588 G3788

ἵσταν ἀτενίζοντες αὐτῷ  
that were were fastened on him  
G2258 G816 G846

## Additional Cross-References

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**Luke 4:17** (Parallel theme): And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

**John 8:2** (Parallel theme): And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.

**Matthew 26:55** (Parallel theme): In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

**Luke 5:3** (Parallel theme): And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

**Luke 19:48** (Parallel theme): And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.