

Why do we stand when we read God's Word on Sundays?

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Why does the congregation stand every Sunday as a man opens the Bible and reads it in front of the assembly?

1. Because we know the Fear of the LORD (2 Cor 5.11)

Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men (2 Cor 5.11). The Apostle Paul -- and every believer -- knows what the terror of God is since the moment of conversion led the sinner to understand his guilt and dire predicament before the all-seeing eyes of a just and righteous God who promises to punish every sin. Thus, because God is so holy and majestic, and because we know the great glory of God (albeit, imperfectly), we stand in honor of this great God. Our God is mighty and powerful. And knowing the fear that belongs to our God because of who He is and His great and unrivaled character, we count it a joy to stand in honor of His unmatched Name.

2. Because we honor Him who speaks to Us (Ecc 5.7)

The Bible says to "fear God" (Ecc 5.7). To honor our God, we stand in His presence. To show proper respect for the One who made and created us is the great and happy obligation of His people. As God spoke in times of old, mountains shook and lightnings and thunders came down from God. Now, He speaks through His written and sufficient Word. To honor our great God, one way that we choose to express this is to stand in His presence.

3. Because we remember God is Holy (Ps 99.3, 5; Ex 15.11*)

"Who among the gods is like You, O LORD" (Ex 15.11)? Truly, none can compare with our God. Holy is His Name! Our God is holy and that means that God is wholly different and set-apart. Yes, He is different and separate from anything and everything else. Nothing can compare with Him or rival Him. Because God is so different than us, we stand in His presence to tangibly and physically honor Him who alone is supremely holy and happily unmatched.

4. Because we model how to respond to God's majesty (Ex 19-20)

When God met with the congregation of Israel and delivered the Law of God (Ex 20:1-17), the people saw all this and trembled and stood at a distance (Ex 20:18). They knew that God's thunder and lightning flashes and the sound of His divine trumpet and the mountain smoking was different than anything else they'd ever seen. So they responded by trembling and standing in awe. How should God's people respond to God? With fear. With honor. With joy. With trembling. With honor. So, when we read God's Word -- His spoken Word -- we stand in awe and respond humbly.

5. Because we respond to God differently than the world (Ps 50.17)

Nonbelievers do not love God nor do they concern themselves with the things of God. But the people of God -- who have been called out from the world and set apart for the Master's use as they've been redeemed by the Lamb's blood -- respond differently by enjoying and embracing the word of God as it goes forth. Nonbelievers could care less about God's truth going forth. They cast God's Word behind their back (Ps 50.17). The people of God, however, say with the psalmist in loud exclamations: "O how I love your Law" (Ps 119.97) and "I delight in your commandments" (Ps 119.47). Believers "hasten and do not delay to keep God's commands" (Ps 119.60). We stand because it reminds us to hear, heed, and respond differently than the world. May God's Word pierce us regularly.

6. Because we follow the example of God's people (Neh 9.3; Luke 4.16; Lev 9.5)

In Nehemiah 9, the sons of Israel gathered together to confess their sin and when they did so, they stood in their place and read from the Book of the Law for a fourth of the day (Neh 9.3). This is understood to be historical narrative and not a binding principle for all of the people of God, but nevertheless, when the people of God gathered corporately, on this occasion, they stood up for the public reading of the Law. In keeping with the historical practice of God's people standing in honor and reverence for the Word, so we do likewise as we remember our God's glory!