

“And he saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:9, 10 , KJV).

WORSHIP AND SERVICE

Our study considers the question whether the two words, “worship” and “service” are the same. When we consider the New Testament's teaching on worship versus service, we can look at how the word is used in the entire Bible. I say this because Jesus reaches back to Exodus and brings the ancient words of worship and service into the first century AD.

The devil tempted Jesus **to 'fall down' and worship** him. Jesus answered that we are **to worship** the Lord our God and Him only should **we serve**. This was not a new requirement but one that Jesus as a man was born under.

WHAT JESUS WAS BORN UNDER

*“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under **the law**” (Galatians 4:4). The Law referenced is the Law of Moses which includes the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 4:13). The Ten Commandments begin with this prohibition against “other gods”: “**Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God**” (Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 5:9).*

The phrase “bow down” in the Greek Septuagint Version of the Old Testament is the same word “worship”[proskuneō]ⁱ used by the devil and Jesus.

Popular commentaries say that Jesus quoted from such passages as Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20 that says, “***Fear*** the Lord”. The Ten Commandments are not referenced by them although the First Commandment uses the exact words that Jesus uses. The words are “worship [προσκυνησεις]ⁱⁱ and “serve” [λατρευσης]”ⁱⁱⁱ in the (Greek) Septuagint Version of the Ten Commandments. Although the word “only” is not precisely there, neither is it in Deuteronomy 6 and 10. However, the context of the Commandments demands “only” because it eliminates all objects of competition. “*Thou shalt have none other gods before me*” (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7).

That Jesus quoted from the Ten Commandments is bolstered when we observe that Jesus is responding to the devil's tempting Jesus to “worship” [προσκυνησεις] him. The devil does not say “Fear me” [φοβηθηση] but says “Worship me.” This difference is fundamental in this lesson as we comment on the current controversial issue of the meaning of “service.” Are the two words “worship” and “service” synonymous? Can the word “worship” be substituted for the word “serve” and vice versa?

“WORSHIP” CAN BE NON-RELIGIOUS

The intent of “worship” determines meaning

The original Hebrew word used by God to Moses is *shâchâh* (*Strong's* number H7812) which means “to *depress*, that is, *prostrate* (especially reflexively [to self or for self] in homage [show respect or allegiance] to royalty or God).”^{iv} The word is used in Genesis and Exodus for a person's obeisance before people, visitors, angels, Esau, sheaf, Joseph, father-in-law, a golden calf, as well as to God.

The first time it is used in respect to God is with Abraham in

Genesis 22. His intent is indicated by his actions. He “*clave the wood for the burnt offering*” before the young men and his son Isaac.

The prohibition of worship in the Ten Commandments is toward gods (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5) which we can call a religious or spiritual worship. Obviously, we can deduce that bowing before a man or thing, as if he/it were a god, is forbidden.

In other cases such bowing for respect is excepted. For examples, under the Ten Commandments, there's the obeisance (“worship”, *shâchâh or προσκυνησεις*) of Abigail to David; David to Saul; Mephibosheth to David; Cushie to Joab; Solomon to Bathsheba; the sons of the prophets to the prophet Elisha; and the ones bowing to a king: woman of Tekoah, Joab, Absalom, Araunah, Nathan, Bathsheba. We know from the examples they are accepted because prophets of God are listed as doing it. Hence, the intent of obeisance (worship) is important. In other words, “Why are you bowing before this person?” The problem comes when one “takes hold upon other gods and worship (bow down to) them and serve them” (1 Kings 9:9).

A young man kisses a girl's hand during the Middle Ages or prostrates himself before a king or lord; this would be *προσκυνησεις* yet without sin. A President bows and kisses the Pope's ring or bows before a Muslim king religiously would be a violation the 10 Commandments. One's intent of the bowing is important.

WORSHIP IS DIFFERENTIATED BY OVERT, CONSCIOUS ACTION

The devil precedes the word “worship” with the action verb of “*falling down and...*” This follows the pattern of the use of the word

“worship” in both Testaments. It is a visible and overt act. **The word “worship” [proskuneō] is preceded by an action towards doing it;** for example, “come to or come up to”, “fall down or bow to”, “ran to”, etc. Never is this true with the word “serve” (or “fear” for that matter).

Abraham heeds the test of God to offer his son as a sacrifice at a certain place in Moriah. When he and his company arrive, Abraham tells his servants to stay with the donkeys and “I and the lad **will go yonder and worship**” (Genesis 22:5). The action verb “go” precedes the word “worship.”

This is also true in the first century. Matthew 2:2 illustrates that the Magi say that they “**are come to worship Him.**” Some other passages are John 12:20, “**came up to w.**”; Revelation 15:4, “shall come and w.” ; Acts 8:27 “**[Ethiopian eunuch] came to Jerusalem to w.**” ; 24:11, “**went up to Jerusalem to w.**”; 1 Corinthians 14:25, Revelation 4:10, 19:10, 22:8, “**fall down to w.**” ; Revelation 3:9, “**come** and w.” There are few passages in the New Testament where this “worship” is used alone; in such cases it could be argued that the verb is implied.

What about the word “service”?

IS THE WORD “SERVICE” THE SAME AS “WORSHIP”?

Latreuo is the Greek word translated as “service” by Jesus during His temptation and in the Ten Commandments and it means to “minister to the gods or man, like a slave.”^{vi} The word that the devil, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord uses for “worship” does not mean this. A different word entirely.

Under Moses, the Priests and the Levites **served** at the Temple (and before that, at the Tabernacle). Their daily work to God was a religious work. “*Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances*

of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary” (Hebrews 9:1). This service in Greek is *latreuo*, a religious service of labor; e.g., the priests' work at the tabernacle. The Hebrew source is *aw-bad* meaning “to *work* (in any sense); by implication to *serve, till*, (causatively) *enslave*, etc.”^{vii} Although their service involved maintaining and preparing the temple for the people to worship, it was certainly not the bowing down “worship”. But it was service to God.

Jesus' mission is not to be distracted or derailed. He tells the devil that not only will He not “worship” him but His decision is to obey the Father's destiny for Him on the earth. “*Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience [to God, the Father] by the things which he suffered*” (Hebrews 5;8,9). Jesus follows God's plan even to the cross.

A “PROBLEM” VERSE

Paul implored the Roman brethren, “...present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable **service.**” (Romans 12:1). This doesn't cause a problem in the King James Version, but when versions^{viii} are published with “worship” instead of service, confusion results over when one actually “worships.” **Worship** and **service** in the Ten Commandments were different and our Lord Jesus confirms that they were and are different words. The translators can legitimately use the English word “worship” because it has so many definitions in our society including “respect”, “dignity”, “divine honors”, “civil deference”, etc.^{ix}

Did the apostle mean to refer to the “bowing down” type of worship or to the work of service? Did he imply that he was referring to a specific culminating act of “falling down” or “going

to”?

The context bears out that he did not. The apostle elaborates by urging the reader to be faithful in their daily lives to the Lord. In the verses which follow, we are to keep ourselves from the way of the world (verse 2), use the diverse gifts with which we have been blessed (verses 6-8), show kindness to all (verses 10-16), and overcome evil with good (verses 17-21). Such exhortations deal with our every day service before the Lord, not acts of “bowing down” or “going to” worship.

SERVICE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT TEMPLE OF GOD

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).

The thought of Romans 12 is expressed in 1 Corinthians 6 about our body and spirit being the temple of the Holy Spirit and that we are obligated like a slave to God. The command is to honor Him by appropriate behavior in the use of our bodies.

Since we each are a temple of God, our control and use of our body is considered “service” (Romans. 12:1) just as the Levites and Priests labored to care for the Jerusalem Temple and its vessels.

Even so, we are to dedicate our vessel to the Lord. *“If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Timothy 2:21).*

Jesus paid the sacrificial price for our redemption from our lost state, i.e., by His death on the cross. Therefore we are redeemed,

bought and paid for, as a slave is purchased. We belong to God; hence, we are expected to “glorify” God in our body (and in our spirit). That is, we are to serve God daily by keeping our bodies pure for the master's use; e.g., sexual purity. We are to treat our body as it were, indeed, a “temple of the Holy Spirit” by glorifying God.

The word “glorify” (1 Corinthians 6) is *doxazō*, a form of which is translated “worship” in the sense of honor in a public sitting (Luke 14:10, KJV). We honor our master by our behavior. The same thought is in Romans 12:1. We live not to shame but to honor our family's head.

SPECIFIC ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE DISTINCTION

In John 4, the woman at Jacob's well did not inquire of Jesus whether one should **live** at Mount Gerizim or in Jerusalem, but where one should **go** and “do” worship. When the Ethiopian eunuch **went** to Jerusalem, it was to “do” an act of worship, not to live (Acts 8:27. Likewise, the apostle Paul had gone to Jerusalem to worship [‘to do’](Acts 24:11), but clearly his life's service to God was elsewhere (Acts 9:15; 13:47; Romans 11:13; 15:16). Each of these reveals a distinction between our daily life of service and “doing” as an act of worship.

Before going to the cross, Jesus warned the apostles, "...the time is coming that whoever kills you will think he offers God service" (John 16:2). Jesus employs the same Greek word (*latreia*) which Paul used in Romans 12. Surely, the Jewish leaders didn't consider putting men to death a act of worship, but they believed they were serving God (Deuteronomy 13:1-11; Acts 6:13-14; 7:57-58). They would certainly have differentiated this "service" from their acts of worship.^x

SERVICE IS MORE THAN AN ACT OF WORSHIP

It is reasonably noted by a teacher that all robins are birds, but not all birds are robins; all canoes are boats, but not all boats are canoes; and all sneakers are shoes, but not all shoes are sneakers. Equally, all [“bowing down”] worship is service to God, but not all service to God is worship. The Bible makes a recognizable distinction between the two words. The context identifies whether an overt action of worship is referred to or if it's a person's daily living.

LIVING FOR JESUS: INTENT DEFINES “SERVING”

What is the intent of your labor? Is it religious in intent?

Daniel faithfully served Darius (6:1-4). However, the prohibition of the Ten Commandments is that among “gods” one is to serve the only true God. Although Daniel served the King (as we would serve on any job or trade), he did not serve him as a god. *“But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not **serve thy gods**, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up”* (Daniel 3:18). Service is like worship. Intent is decisive.^{xi}

Daniel and his friends served king Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1:3-7, 19) before serving Darius, but they would not worship him or his gods (Daniel 3:12-18). In this case we see that there is a distinction between their service and their worship. They were commanded before hand by the prophet Jeremiah to serve the Chaldeans for their advantage. God's prophet Jeremiah commanded *“Fear not to **serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you”*** (Jeremiah 40:9). Their service intent to the captors was a physical service and their religious intent was to God.

Christians are to serve religiously at all times. They serve their God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has directed them to serve their earthly masters.

“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart” (Ephesians 6:5, 6).

Today the best employee is a Christian because he is working, not to please man who has limited sight, but to please His Master in Heaven.

ACTS OF WORSHIP

Every aspect of a Christian's life is to be service to God, but not all service is what is traditionally called “worship.” Both worship and service can be public and private. There are acts of worship that are performed only in an assembly. Some acts of worship are done privately like the praying in one's closet that Jesus mentioned (Matthew 6:6).

We need to be careful not to limit our worship to 3 or 4 hours of assembly time with the Lord's people per week. The Lord's Supper and the contributing of our means is specifically limited to public assembly. These acts can not be carried out privately. The same is true with teaching and admonishing one another in singing. This aspect of singing can be fulfilled only in the assembly. Teaching and preaching can be done in or outside the assembly.

“GOING TO CHURCH”

“Going to church” is a common expression nowadays. It generally has the idea of attending a “traditional” worship. Actually the person is going to an assembly meeting of those of like faith at a specific location. The assembly will go through a series of acts of worship. Since the Bible commands attendance at assembly (Hebrews 10:25) it can be sound to say one is going to [a] service to God. But as has already been pointed out, all of godly living is service to God. Assembling is just one act of our service. We can stipulate that this is “assembly worship.”

Whereas our daily worship must be authorized by Jesus via the Spirit's Scriptures, even so the acts associated with assembly worship must be authorized by the Holy Spirit via Scriptures. The Bible authorizes at least five in number: singing, praying, teaching (or reading or preaching), benevolence, and communion. Except for the singing, the original church did all of these in their initial togetherness (Acts 2:42). They continued in the teaching by the apostles, fellowship (sharing of self and possessions, particularly according to needs), breaking of bread [communion—eating of meals was from house to house] and prayers while at the temple. Singing of hymns is mentioned later when in the synagogue setting.

“Kiss toward God” (or bowing) worship in assembly.

These are public acts of worship that are done with a reverential kiss to our God.^{xii} We go to assembly for these acts. We can go to assembly and study the Bible, pray together, sing together, partake of the communion together, lay by in the common treasury in the assembly. These are acts of “bowing” or “throwing a kiss to God” worship; i.e., when we do it from our hearts to God.

We can worship with a kiss to God by studying His Word and we are authorized to do this (2 Timothy 2:15), but we cannot “read this epistle among (plural) you” (together, Colossians 4:16) unless we are together. We are authorized to worship God by praying individually (1 Thessalonians 5:17) but we are to pray in words that are understood by others only when with others (1 Corinthians 14). The same applies to singing. Only here we have a specific command to do it is the assembly: we are to obey the act of singing **to one another** (saints; i.e., the assembly) as commanded in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. Those Scriptures specifically says that we are to do that while doing it to God in our hearts.

There are two unique acts of “kiss” worship associated with the assembly. We can partake of **the Lord's Table** only in the assembly (1 Corinthians 10; 11). This cannot be obeyed or imitated (1 Corinthians 11:1) at any other place. If we do it, we are doing it without authorization by the Spirit's approved command or example. This act of worship is unique because it is the one of two worship acts that is restricted to the assembly. In other words, we are authorized to worship God in song any time and anywhere. The same is true with prayer and Bible study. We are to pray without ceasing. We are to be diligent in our Bible study. Anywhere and anytime.

The only other act of kiss worship restricted to the assembly would be 1 Corinthians 16:2. Brethren and sisters are authorized by commandment and example to lay by themselves into the assembly's treasury. The collection must be into the common treasury to be distributed according to Biblically specified needs.

Although announcements generally are not considered acts of worship, they are authorized in assembly (Hebrews 10:24) in obeying the provoking of one another to love and good works; for example, reading reports, noting those in need of prayers, etc., and letters of encouragement from brethren. Most of Paul's epistles contained personal messages and salutations and were to be read in the assemblies (Colossians 4:16). All of these are done in service to God through Jesus.

“Kiss toward God” (or bowing) worship outside the assembly.

However, “kiss to God” worship is not to be limited to an assembly. Prayer at a meal should be worship. We ought to habitually set time aside to worship the Lord in prayers and Bible studies privately or in our homes (Matthew 6:6; Acts 12:12) in addition to that of a public assembly. Recall, Jesus made it a habit to worship the Lord individually in the mountains (Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 6:12; John 6:15). What a blessing to be able to express our thanksgiving and adoration to the Lord anywhere through prayer and song (Colossians 4:2; James 5:13). If we will do so; it will bring glory to God and elevate our faith in Him.

ACTS OF OTHER SERVICE

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Colossians 3:17). As has been pointed out, “service” covers the multitude of our acts; this passage reminds us that we are governed in all of our service by Scriptural authority. This passage is in the midst of forbearing and forgiving brethren, the worship aspect of singing, and the family relationships and master-servant relationship.

This context culminates with “*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; ... for ye serve the Lord Christ*” (Colossians 3:23, 24).

Everything we do must be authorized^{xiii} by the Lord through the Scriptures. Even then what is lawful must yield to what is expedient or helpful (1 Corinthians 10:23) to our fellows.

Fasting is authorized by the Lord. It can be connected with prayer and is listed as a service but not as an act of public worship. Fasting is a private matter (Matthew 6:18); yet it can complement prayers in important decision-making such as commending elders in their service (Acts 14:23) and in marital relationships (1 Corinthians 7:5). It cannot be for show.

SERVICE FOR JESUS' SAKE

*“For whoever may will to save his life, shall lose it, and whoever may lose his life **for my sake**, he shall save it”* (Luke 9:24).

Here are some things the Bible says or illustrates of service we are to do for Jesus:

1. Suffer physically and emotionally for His sake (Matthew 5:11; Acts 5:41; 9:16; 15:26; 21:13; Romans 8:36; 1 Corinthians 4:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:5). This would necessarily include what we do that provokes the suffering (such as teaching the truth).
2. Settle down and work for a living (2 Thessalonians 3:12).
3. Sacrifice social relationships (Matthew 19:12; Mark 10:29; Luke 6:22; Philippians 3:7-8).
4. Join in prayers with others (Romans 15:30).

5. Serve others (2 Corinthians 4:5).
6. Show Jesus in our living (Mark 13:9; 2 Corinthians 4:11; 12:10; Ephesians 4:1; Philippians 1:13; 2:30; Philemon 23).
7. Forgive and love (Philemon 9, 20).
8. Be a good citizen (1 Peter 2:13).
9. Give a cup of cold water (Matthew 18:5; Luke 9:48).
10. Share the benefits (2 Corinthians 9:23).

CONCLUSION:

Romans 12:1 should never be used to limit our assembling. Rather it should enforce our dedicated service and faithfulness to our vows of submitting our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time our service will keep us from “forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Hebrews 10:25).

A sad commentary is demonstrated in the movie of the “Hatfields and McCoys” and their “worship” in the church of Christ. They had things backward and I think we do sometimes. They were possessed with their hatred for one another but they let it rest on Sunday during their assembly while the antagonists sit on opposite sides of the building.

As long as we attend assembly we consider we have done God a service. In this spirit, we do not “worship” Him from our hearts. We just go through some activities and that's it. If we consider “assembly worship” as our total service to God then our behavior during the week will probably suffer for it. We do not glorify God by our talk, our thinking, or our overt deeds. Perhaps we even do the opposite with cursing and hatred showing in our lives. We have forgotten God until the next assembly.

God wants the total service of our being. Jesus said, “*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment*” (Mark 12:30). This includes daily “worship” service and “bowing worship” service in public assembly.

Some other words of religious service:

G4336 Mark 6:46 Jesus **prayed** προσεύχομαι Strong uses worship in italics. Luke 6:12

Col 4:2 Continue in prayer,^{G4335} and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

G4573-6 God-fearing σεβάζομαι sebazomai **Thayer Definition:** 1) to fear, be afraid
2) to worship from 4576 sebomai RELIGIOUS, DEVOUT, REVERED,
GOD-FEARING

worship Mark 7:7 **in vain do they worship^{G4576} me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.**

Rom. 1:25 changed truth into a lie and worshiped G4573

Saying, ...persuadeth men to **worship** God contrary to the Law (Acts 18:13)

religious proselytes Acts 13:43

devout Acts 13:50 women of the city

17:17 In Athens Paul preached to... devout persons (other worshipers) .

God-fearing Acts 16:14 Lydia a woman who worshiped God, revered God.

Acts 17:4 devout Greeks believed and consorted with Paul **God-fearing, serving**

feared Justus worshiped God whose house joined hard to synagogue (18:7)

revered Diana whom all Asia and world REVERES (19:27). .

G1391 glorify δόξα doxa Lk. 14:10 respect; dignity -only place glory is so translated?

G2151 RESPECT ignorantly worship show respect (to God or parents) Acts 17:23; 1 Tim. 5:4

G1479 Col 2:23 will **worship** worship according to man.compare with G2357 (ceremonial worship, religious) in Jas. 1:26

other SERVICE, SERVANT (besides G3000)

G1398 douleuo (doulos) slave in bondage

G1247 diakoneo deacon, an attendant

G3610 oiketes house domestic

G2324 therapon menial attendant

i **Strong's G4352: προσκυνέω** proskuneō **Strong:** Probably a derived from κύων (meaning to *kiss*, like a dog *licking* his master's hand); to *fawn* or *crouch to*, that is, (literally or figuratively) *prostrate* oneself in homage (*do reverence to, adore*): - worship.

ii **Strong's G4352**

iii **G3000 λατρεύω** latreuō **Thayer Definition:**

1) to serve for hire

2) **to serve, minister to, either to the gods or men and used alike of slaves and freemen**

2a) in the NT, to render religious service or homage, to worship 2b) to perform sacred services, to offer gifts, to worship God in the observance of the rites instituted for his worship 2b1) of priests, to officiate, to discharge the sacred office

iv **H7812** Worship, Strong's: Hebrew. A primitive root; to *depress*, that is, *prostrate* (especially reflexively in homage to royalty or God): - bow (self) down, crouch, fall down (flat), humbly beseech, do (make) obeisance, do reverence, make to stoop, worship.

v **Strong's G4352**

vi **G3000 λατρεύω** latreuō.

vii As used in the Ten Commandments;: **aw-bad** (*definition, Strong's H5647*).

viii Bible in Basic English; Easy-to-Read Version; English Standard Version; Good News Bible; God's Word; International Standard Version.

ix Webster's 1828 Dictionary

x Thought given in <http://www.lookinguntojesus.net/20050911.htm> Sept 11 2005

xi The major problem is that the Hebrew word for "serve" is the same word for the menial slave (such as serving in Egypt or Babylon in bondage), a political subject, and religiously "serving" God or idols. Since in the Greek language there are different words that help one to identify the type of service, the Septuagint translators did take advantage of this and chose to use εργασασθε (toiling in labor or trade) instead of *latreuō*, which to the Greek referred more to a religious service (Hebrews 9:1).

xii proskuneō **Strong:** Probably a derived from κύων (meaning to *kiss*, like a dog *licking* his master's hand)

xiii "In the name of": both Strong and Thayer indicate that authority is inherent in the word.