

Corporate Worship

By Doug Hamilton

What is Worship?

Jesus replied to the devil in the revealing verse of Matthew 4:10, "...*Begone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship (PROSKUNEO) the Lord your God, and serve (LATRUEO) Him only.'*" He used two different words for worship, PROSKUNEO and LATRUEO. He said that it is written to PROSKUNEO the Lord your God, and LATRUEO Him only.

LATRUEO

This is commonly translated as worship and means *to minister to God, i.e. render, religious homage in service to the Creator*. It generally dealt with our everyday service in the kingdom of God and some of the locations of this word are in the following:

- It was the personal worship of fastings and prayers of Anna in Luke 2:37.
- It was the personal worship which Paul described as a commitment to God through Jesus in Philippians 3:3.
- It was the personal worship which Paul used to describe a mindset of Christianity in Acts 24:14.
- It was the personal constant prayer that Paul offered to God in 2 Timothy 1:3.
- It was the personal daily life which Paul calls for Christians to carry out in Romans 12:1.

The typical use of LATRUEO is not in the context of a specific location/time/order dimension, but a regular continual practice, hence service. When we offer daily prayers for our meals, at bedtime, while driving and over the sick, it is LATRUEO personal worship unto God. This is why it is commonly referred to as service.

Proskuneo

It means to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand; to fawn or crouch to, i.e. to prostrate oneself in homage and do reverence to. This type of worship is characterized not so much on a daily practice of an individual carrying out acts of service to God, but typically one's religious homage among a people collectively paying reverence to God. The common theme is a consistent show of patterned reverence unto the Father. One of the best ways to understand PROSKUNEO worship would be from the standpoint of the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:19-24.

John 4:19-24 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. ²⁰
"Our fathers worshiped (*PROSKUNEO*) in this mountain, and you {people} say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship(*PROSKUNEO*)." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship (*PROSKUNEO*) the Father. ²²
"You worship (*PROSKUNEO*) that which you do not know; we worship (*PROSKUNEO*) that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers(*PROSKUNEO*) shall worship (*PROSKUNEO*) the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers(*PROSKUNEO*). ²⁴ "God is spirit, and those who worship (*PROSKUNEO*) Him must worship (*PROSKUNEO*) in spirit and truth."

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The Samaritan woman found herself embroiled in a very serious discussion of the day. Her question referred to the collective corporate worship of the people of God. The Samaritans believed it was on Mount Gerizim, but the Jews believed it to be in Jerusalem. Jesus said the collective worship (proskuneo) of the people of God was not at Gerizim or Jerusalem, but in Spirit and in Truth. Under Christ, true worshippers of God shall not be limited to these two locations for their collective showing of reverence to the Father, but instead be on two criteria, spirit and truth. Those people who are gathering to worship God must worship Him from their heart and mind, being spiritually-based and truth-based, not geographically-based. This is the New Testament pattern for worship of the people of God.

- It is collective PROSKUNEO worship of the twenty-four elders in Rev 4:10-11.
- It is collective PROSKUNEO worship of the cherubim in Rev 5:12.
- It is collective PROSKUNEO worship of the angels of God in Rev 7:11-12.
- It was collective PROSKUNEO worship of the wise men of Jesus in Matthew 2:2.
- It was collective PROSKUNEO worship of the Greek proselytes joined the Jews in Jerusalem in John 12:20.
- It was collective PROSKUNEO worship for which the Ethiopian eunuch went to Jerusalem to carry out in Acts 8:27.
- It was collective PROSKUNEO worship of the Jews that Paul had to travel to Jerusalem to carry out in Acts 24:11.

These are all examples of PROSKUNEO worship being carried out for the purpose to pay homage to God. If it was LATRUEO, it could have carried it out in private in their everyday living. The whole reason I am taking the time to cover this information between the differences of the two is so that we will know which one the lesson is focusing on...PROSKUNEO, the collective paying of homage to the Father.

Three Points About Worship in Christ's Church

1) It is Scriptural –Christ's church follows the pattern set forth in the Bible

In the latter portion of the Book of 1 Corinthians, we find collection of phrases communicating a PROSKUNEO assembling of the local body of believers in Corinthian community. Here are some of the phrases identifying their gathering together in a collective worship to God the Father.

- 1 Cor 10:17 "...one body..."
- 1 Cor 11:17 "...come together..."
- 1 Cor 11:18 "...come together as a church..."
- 1 Cor 11:20 "...when you meet together..."
- 1 Cor 11:33 "So then, my brethren, when you come together..."
- 1 Cor 11:34 "...come together..."
- 1 Cor 12:12 "...one body..."
- 1 Cor 12:27 "...you are Christ's body..."
- 1 Cor 14:23 "...the whole church should assemble together..."
- 1 Cor 14:26 "...you assemble..."

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It is in this context that Paul discusses their misuse of their gifts of the Holy Spirit, acts of irreverence in the assembly as well as division resulting in their behavior. It is also here that we catch a glimpse of some of the positive acts of the collective worship unto the Father. Here are five familiar sounding items.

- Praying: -11:4-5, 14:15,
- Singing: -14:15, 26
- Giving: -16:1-2
- Instruction: -12:1-31; 13:1-13; 14:19, 15:1-58
- The Lord's Supper: -10:14-17, 11:23-33

The items of reverent expression of collective worship here on the first day of the week, the praying, singing, giving, instructing and the Lord's Supper were all in the first century church at Corinth. They are scriptural concepts that we can have great joy in knowing that all the churches of Christ would have been instructed in the same.

Paul told the Corinthians that he taught the same thing in every church.

- 1 Corinthians 4:17 For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

The fact that we catch individual glimpses of the five PROSKUNEO acts of worship in the other churches found in the Bible is a testament to the fact that they were all taught the same thing. Our acts of worship are scriptural.

2) It is Simple.

- The way we worship is simple. (You do not have to be an expert to carry out these simple ways.)
- The place we worship is simple. (generally not a fancy, gothic-looking place superfluous in nature)
- The people we worship with are simple. (We do not meet with a collection of the upper-crust, high-society socialites, but with others who have been saved or desire to be saved by the blood of Jesus Christ.)
- The God we worship is simple. (He desires a personal relationship with us and not to be distant and aloof of our concerns.)

3) It is Sincere –we are to carry out all these areas with a sincere heart

- Our singing is to be from the heart. (Ephesians 5:19)
- Our prayers are to be from the heart. (James 5:16)
- Our learning is to be from the heart. (Ephesians 1:18)
- Our partaking in the Lord's Supper is to be from the heart. (1 Corinthians 11:28)
- Our giving is to be from the heart. (2 Corinthians 9:7)
- Our singing is one of the ways that we are filled with the Spirit for worship. (Ephesians 5:18-19)

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A Closer Look at the Five Elements of Corporate Worship

1) Prayer

- The prayers we offer in the church powerful. (James 5:16)
- Our prayers are one of the ways that the church finds comfort in struggles. (Acts 16:25)
- Our prayer is one of the ways that we find true peace in God. (Philippians 4:6-7)
- Our prayer is one of the ways that we keep ourselves in the love of God. (Jude 1:20-21)

2) Offering

- Jesus said giving will bless us more than receiving. (Acts 20:35)
- It provides us true joy in this life. (Rom 15:26)
- It helps us see where our heart truly is. (Matt 6:21)
- It directly deals with the heart. (2 Corinthians 9:7)
- It places us in the same mission. (2 Corinthians 8:1-5)
- It is one of the ways that we make a deep connection to Jesus. (2 Corinthians 8:9)

3) Song

- Our singing is how we allow the word of Christ to richly dwell in us. (Colossians 3:16)
- Our singing is a great expression of joy and contentment unto the Father. (James 5:13)
- Our sincere song to God is viewed as beautiful praise unto God. (Revelation 14:1-4)

4) The Lord's Supper

Matt 26:26-28 *And while they were eating, Jesus took {some} bread, and after a blessing, He broke {it} and gave {it} to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." ²⁷ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave {it} to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; ²⁸ for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.* After this meal which Jesus inaugurated, the following events occurred:

- He fervently prayed for an hour in the Garden of Gethsemane, meditating on the great suffering He was about to go through as the temple guards showed up for arrest. Being falsely accused, He was put on trial, beaten, threatened, intimidated, spit upon and yelled at.
- He received two excruciating scourges, the truth scourge and the death scourge. The skin on His arms, legs and back were ripped open, exposing the muscle tissue and causing a free-flow of blood. He had a crown of three to four inch thorns pressed into the flesh of His upper skull.
- He had to carry the one-hundred pound plus crossbeam for a distance of over 600 yards up a hill called Golgotha. The Roman guards stripped the clothes off Jesus, laid Him on the crossbeam and drove long, metal spikes into His wrists and ankles.
- At noon, the sky went dark as God the Father turned His back on Jesus. The people walked by, spitting on Him, mocking Him and cursing Him.
- *Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* That is the TRUTH; now worship Him in SPIRIT as you partake of the Lord's Supper!

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5) Instruction

- We have many different topics of instruction for which to teach. *1 Tim 6:2 Teach and preach these {principles.}*
- We must teach in a prepared manner. *2 Timothy 4:1-2 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. (KJV)*
- We are to instruct in a “Christocentric” manner. *1 Corinthians 2:2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*

The closing invitation:

Matt 26:40-41 And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you {men} could not keep watch with Me for one hour? ⁴¹ "Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." We are scheduled for about an hour of worship for the entire week. Let us strive to make it the best hour of the week when we are together!