

Worship Words in the N.T.

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I. Worship

A. ***Latreuō*** – **Serve, worship** (our word *liturgy* is based on this word)

1. Definition: Originally it meant *to serve for hire*, especially in the context of temple sacrifice. It eventually came to mean *to minister as a priest*. Finally, in the Scriptures, it was used simply *to render religious service or homage*, especially when offering a sacrifice.
2. Uses: [21x's, 8 by Lk and 6 in Hebrews] serve (Mt 4:10; Lk 1:74; 4:8; Acts 26:7; 27:23; Rom 1:9, 25; 2 Tim 1:3; Heb 8:5; 9:14; Rev 7:15; 22:3); worship (Lk 2:37; Acts 7:7, 42; 24:14; Php 3:3; Heb 9:9; 10:2; 12:28); and minister (Heb 13:10).
 - a. It always describes worship connected to the temple, whether Jehovah's (Lk 2:37; Rom 9:4; Heb 8:5; 9:1, 6, 9; 10:2) or an idol's (Acts 7:42; Rom 1:25).
 - i. Sometimes this worship/service is used metaphorically to describe Christian worship (Rom 12:1; Php 3:3, Heb 9:14; 12:28; 13:10 also Romans 12:1 in its noun form).
 - ii. Ultimately this new worship will be exported to the New Jerusalem (Rev 7:15; 22:3) where there is no temple.
 - b. It is kind of a kosher claim to worship/serve God and appears to be something Paul did frequently (Acts 24:14; 27:23; Rom 1:9; 2 Tim 1:3).
 - c. *Latreuō* is connected with or conveyed by the following: Prayers, fasting, sacrifice, preaching, tabernacle, gifts, and altar.

B. ***Sebō*** and ***Eusebeō*** – **Show piety or religious devotion**

1. Definition: It is religion practiced with devotion but somehow insufficient (except 1 Tim 2:10; 5:4). Its antonym, *asebos*, is translated as “ungodly” or “wicked” and is used nine times. Both words have ethical import.
2. Uses: Used only 13 times, 9 of those in Acts.
 - a. Misguided Jewish piety (Mt 15:9; Mk 7:7; Acts 18:13).
 - b. Actions by converts to Judaism or those amiable to God's people (Acts 13:43, 50; 17:4, 17) or those who appear to have non-Jewish backgrounds (Acts 16:14; 18:7).
 - c. Pagan worship with good but misguided motives (Acts 17:23; 19:27).
 - d. Christian compassion (1 Tim 2:10; 5:4).

C. ***Proskuneō*** – **Worship, to show obeisance**

1. Definition: Etymologically this word meant *to kiss toward*. The practice of throwing a kiss to the kings of the Orient evolved into bowing before them (and perhaps also kissing their hands). Hence this word became synonymous with *bowing* and *fear*. In the N.T. its meaning is mainly *to show honor, respect reverence*. Bowing (obeisance), however, is strongly suggested in the word since twenty of its fifty-four uses are accompanied by bowing or falling to the ground (Mt 2:11; 4:9; 8:2; 9:18; 15:25; 18:26; 20:20; 28:9; Mk 5:6; 15:19; Acts 10:25; 1 Cor 14:25; Rev 3:9; 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4, 10; 22:8-9). Bottom line: *Recognition of God's position*.
2. Uses: 54 times (25x in the gospels and 22x in Revelation)

- a. This worship only belongs to God. When it is offered to another, it is eschewed: Jesus/Satan (Mt 4:9-10; Lk 4:7-8); John/Angel (Rev 19:10; 22:8-9); Men/Beast, Dragon, Satan (Rev 13:4, 8, 12, 15; 16:2), Peter/Cornelius (Acts 10:25-26), (cf. Acts 7:43).
- b. Jesus is appropriately worshiped in the Gospels (Mt 2:2, 8, 11; 14:33; Jn 9:38), especially after his resurrection (Mt 28:9, 17; Lk 24:52). Both Jesus and God are worshiped, by both the one healed and the crowd observing it.
- c. It properly produces awe, fear, and praise. In several passages fear (Mt 18:26; Mk 5:6) and/or bowing (Mt 8:2; 9:18; 15:25; Rev 3:9) is present without “worship”.
- d. It was assumed that this worship should take place in Jerusalem prior to the Christian dispensation (Mt 2:1-2; Jn 4:20-24; 12:20; Acts 8:27; 24:11).
- e. It is expressed through the vehicles of prayer, singing, and body movements. These are vehicles for expressing worship and not the worship itself. The purpose of these vehicles is to recognize God’s position, not to manufacture emotion. Intimacy and emotion are bi-products of worship but never the goal and must not be used as the barometer of worship.
- f. Worship must express the character of God and his deeds in history. *Proskunō* came to be a prayer of adoration in Revelation (4:8-11; 5:8-10; 12-14; 7:10-12; 11:15-18; 12:10-12; 15:3-4; 16:5-7; 19:1-7). It is addressed to both God and Jesus and is concerned with his being (not the gifts he gives to us) and his historic works (particularly creation, Rev 4:8-11; rule, 15:3f; 16:5-7; redemption, 5:8-10; and consummation, 11:15-18) [cf. H. Schonweiss, “Worship,” *New International Dictionary of N.T. Theology* 2:877-878].

II. Praise

A. *Epaineō* – Commend, Praise

1. Definition: Both in its noun and verb forms it means to commend for something done in the past. It deals with activity of the person and not his character.
2. Uses (16x):
 - a. *epainos* is given by God to men (Rom 2:9), especially and fully on the Day of Judgment (Rom 2:29; 1 Cor 4:5; 1 Pet 1:7). It can also be given by God’s ordained authorities (Rom 13:3; 1 Cor 11:2; 2 Cor 8:18; 1 Pet 2:14).
 - b. Or it can be expressions of our praise to him (Rom 15:11; Eph 1:6, 12, 14; Php 1:11).
 - c. It could even be noble thoughts (Php 4:8) or honorable faith (1 Pet 1:7)

B. *Aineō* – Praise

1. Definition: Etymologically it seems to the delineation of God’s activity in history, i.e. recounting what God had done, thus “praising” him.
2. Uses (11x, 7 by Luke):
 - a. It is used only of God (Heb 13:15; Rev 19:5).
 - b. Children can offer it (Mt 21:16) as can angels (Lk 2:13).
 - c. It typically follows momentous occasions (Lk 2:20; 19:37; Acts 2:47) or miracles (Lk 18:43; Acts 3:8-9).

C. **Doxazo –To glorify, honor, exalt**

1. Definition: *Doxa* appears to be the impression left from an individual's outstanding character. Thus, "to glorify" is to recognize/delineate those characteristics. Strictly speaking, we do not give God glory, we simply recognize it. Bottom line: *Recognizing God's character*.
2. Uses: (197x)
 - a. This glory belongs to God (Rom 1:21, 23), often accompanied by bright light (Lk 2:9, 14; 9:31-32; Acts 22:11; cf. 2 Cor 3:7-11; 4:4-6; Rev 21:11, 23-24).
 - b. Jesus shares God's glory (Mt 16:27; 19:28; 25:31; Mk 10:37; Lk 4:6; 19:38; Jn 1:14; 12:28, 41; 13:31-32; 17:1-5). God is eager to glorify his son.
 - c. God and Jesus were glorified most at the crucifixion. For this displayed the ultimate obedience (Jn 7:39; 12:16, 23, 28 [3x's]; 13:31, 32 [5x's]; 17:1).
 - d. Often a result of a miraculous healing (Jn 2:11; 9:24; 11:4). It is given by the individual healed (Lk 13:13; 17:15; 18:43) but especially by the crowd having observed it (Mt 9:8; 15:31; Mk 2:12; Lk 5:25-26; 7:16; Acts 4:21; 11:18).
 - e. God is glorified most by our life-styles of obedience (Mt 5:16; Jn 15:8; 17:4, 5, 10; 1 Cor 6:20; 10:31; 1 Pet 4:11, 14, 16). The same is true with *epainos* (Eph 1:12, 14; Phil 1:11; 1 Pet 1:7). Furthermore, other Christians, and even pagans glorify God when they see our righteous life-styles (2 Cor 9:13; Gal 1:24; 1 Pet 2:12).
 - f. Men often seek it to their own detriment (Mt 6:2; Acts 12:23), others attain it appropriately (Mt 6:29; Lk 2:32; Rom 2:7; 9:4). This is a key word in the matrix of shame/honor relationships (Lk 14:10; Jn 5:41-44; 12:43; 1 Cor 11:7, 15; 12:26).
 - g. God will glorify us if we are faithful (Rom 8:18, 30; 9:23; 2 Cor 3:18).

D. **Eulogia – To bless, give thanks, praise.**

1. Definition: This compound word [*eu & logia*] is literally "to speak well of."
2. Uses (56x's):
 - a. When spoken about God it is rendered "praise" (Lk 1:64, 68; 2:28; 24:53; Rom 1:25; 9:5; James 3:9-10; Rev 5:12-13; 7:12).
 - b. Sometimes this word means "to give thanks" in the context of prayer (Mt 14:19; 26:26; Mk 14:22; 1 Cor 10:16).
 - c. When spoken about another person or to another person (including the Messiah), it is rendered "blessed" (Mt 21:9; 23:39; 25:34; Mk 14:61; Lk 1:42; 2:34; 24:50-51; Jn 12:13; Gal 3:9; Heb 7:6-7). It may be a pledge/benediction of one's children (Heb 11:20-21; 12:17; figuratively 1 Pet 3:9) or even a blessing bestowed on one's enemies (Lk 6:28; Rom 12:14; 1 Cor 4:12).
 - d. It can be used even for a generous financial gift (2 Cor 9:5-6; Heb 7:1-2) or even a gift from God to us (Eph 1:3; Heb 6:7, 14).

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The definition of worship: Recognizing God's position.
The definition of Praise: Recognizing God's characteristics and deeds.
2. Worship, relegated to ritual and external "movement" is Jewish in orientation (particularly *leiturgeō* and *sebō*), not Christian. This would include limiting worship to any particular location (e.g. church buildings), time, rituals (praying, singing, preaching), or bodily movements (kneeling, standing, clapping). "Worship services" (which are often neither worship nor service) may fit into this category and are conspicuously lacking in the N.T. (cf. Jn 4:23-24).
3. Emotions are neither the goal nor barometer of true worship. Emotional ecstasy may be personally satisfying but is not necessarily God-glorifying. The only emotion inherent in worship is fear.
4. The major N.T. vehicles of worship are prayer, singing, and bodily movement (bowing). Remember, these are vehicles used to express worship. They must never substitute for worship itself.
5. Jesus is God and therefore a reasonable recipient of our worship.
6. Praise consists of the characteristics of God and the works of God. There is nothing wrong with thanksgiving, petitions, etc. All have their time and place. But these tend to focus on us. Proper praise must focus on God.
7. God is most glorified by our life-styles. Our words and songs are meaningful only when our lives are genuine.
8. Worship is consistently preceded by humility and followed by change, either in the individual or in the situation surrounding him/her.