



So we'll be Ready when the Time Comes

Worship Reference Study

Chapter 5

Who Worshiped God in the Bible?

The following four tables include individuals and groups from the Old and New Testament respectively. Nearly everyone mentioned offered God a response of worship by bowing or falling facedown.

Individual Old Testament Worshipers				
Worshiper	Times	Hebrew	Gesture	NAS Verse
Job	1	Shachah	Fell to the ground	Job 1:20
Abram	2*	Naphal	Fell on his face	Gen 17:3,17
Abraham	1	Shachah	Bowed himself to the earth	Gen 18:2-3
Eliezer	2	Shachah	Bowed low	Gen 24:26
		Shachah	Bowed himself to the ground	Gen 24:52
Jacob	1	Shachah	Leaning on the top of his staff	Heb 11:21
Israel	1	Shachah	Bowed in worship at the head of his bed	Gen 47:31
Moses	1	Shachah	Bowed low	Exo 34:8
Joshua	1	Shachah	Fell on his face and bowed down	Jos 5:14
Samuel	1	Shachah	Unspecified	1 Sam 1:28
Saul	1	Shachah		1 Sam 15:31
David	2	Shachah	In the house of the Lord	2 Sam 12:20
		Shachah	Bowed on his bed	1 Kin 1:47
Jehoshaphat	1	Shachah	Bowed his head with	2 Chr 20:18

Individual Old Testament Worshipers				
Worshiper	Times	Hebrew	Gesture	NAS Verse
			his face to the ground	
Hezekiah	1	Shachah	Bowed down	2 Chr 29:29-30
Ezekiel	4*	Naphal	Fell on his face	Ezekiel 1:28 Ezekiel 3:23 Ezekiel 43:3 Ezekiel 44:4

** Indicates falling or bowing but not translated from a word commonly rendered worship, such as shachah.*

As God revealed the truth about Himself, individuals and groups alike all offered a similar response. Throughout biblical history, they bowed or fell facedown in worship. The following individuals and groups demonstrated this response on earth: Abram/Abraham, Job, Eliezer, Jacob/Israel, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, the Israelites, Joshua, Gideon, David, unnamed elders, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, all Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Hezekiah, the Levites, Ezra, Ezekiel, and the Magi. When Mary Magdalene and another Mary met the resurrected Christ, they “took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.” In heaven, the angels, four living creatures, 24 elders, and the heavenly hosts all bowed down to express their worship.

Possessed by a legion of demons, a Gerasene man bowed down (from *proskuneo*, the most common Greek word used in the New Testament for worshipping God) before shouting the truth about Jesus as “*Son of the Most High God*”.¹ Whenever demonic spirits saw Jesus, they fell down [*prospipto*] in a posture of reverence while proclaiming the truth about Him.

And whenever the unclean spirits saw him [Jesus], they fell down [prospipto] before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God”. (Mark 3:11 ESV)

When the Philistine idol Dagon encountered God’s presence, it too fell facedown.

Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it to the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon. When the Ashdodites arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set him in his place again. But when they arose early

¹ Mark 5:6-7 NAS and Luke 8:28 NAS

the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. And the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold; only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. (1 Samuel 5:2-4 NAS)

Groups of Old Testament Worshipers

The Old Testament describes six groups that worshiped God on 12 occasions. Nine of these occasions involve the Israelites or Judah. All but three of the nine specify bowing or falling facedown as an expression of worship.

Before Jesus was born, every gesture of worship specified in the Bible involves bowing or falling facedown, except perhaps when Jacob leaned on his staff. On six occasions, the Old Testament mentions worship without specifying a gesture.

Groups of Old Testament Worshipers					
Worshippers		Times	Hebrew	Gesture	NAS Verse
Abraham and Isaac		Intention	Shachah	Unspecified	Gen 22:5
Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and 70 Elders		Implied	Shachah	Unspecified at a distance	Exo 24:1
Israelites 7 Times	Pre-Exodus	1	Shachah	Bowed low	Exo 4:31
	Pre-Passover	1	Shachah		Exo 12:27
	In the Wilderness	1	Shachah	Unspecified at tent entrances	Exo 33:10
	David**	1	Shachah	Bowed low	1 Chr 29:20
	Solomon**	1	Shachah	Bowed with face to the ground	2 Chr 7:3
	Ezra** Nehemiah**	2	Shachah	Bowed with face to the ground	Neh 8:6
			Shachah	Unspecified	Neh 9:3
Judah 2 Times	Jehoshaphat	1	Shachah	Fell down before the Lord	2 Chr 20:18
	Hezekiah	1	Shachah	Bowed down	2 Chr 29:28-30
Hannah and Elkanah		1	Shachah	Before the Lord	1 Sa 1:19
The Heavenly Host		1	Shachah	Bows down	Neh 9:6

*** Indicates an individual named for context purposes only. The biblical text does not describe them expressing worship with the group.*

Individual New Testament Worshipers

Before Jesus rose from the dead, the New Testament rarely mentions individual worshipers. It only describes three persons generating, what may be construed as a gesture of worship. In one instance, a legion of demons was afflicting a man who bowed down before Jesus. In another, the original text does not mention a specific gesture. In a third case, a Samaritan man fell on his face giving thanks to Jesus for healing him of leprosy. This response leans toward gratitude instead of worship since Luke chose the Greek word *pipto* rather than *proskuneo* to describe the gesture and it is unclear whether the man venerated Jesus as God.

Individual New Testament Worshipers				
Worshiper	Times	Greek	Gesture	NAS Verse
Gerasene Man	1	Proskuneo	Bowed down	Mark 5:6
Blind Man	1	Proskuneo	Said, "Lord I believe" then he worshiped	John 9:38
Samaritan Leper	1*	Pipto	Fell on his face	Luke 17:16

* Indicates falling or bowing but not translated from a word commonly rendered worship, such as *proskuneo*

Groups of New Testament Worshipers

The New Testament describes seven groups of worshipers on 16 occasions. All but three specify bowing or falling facedown as an expression of worship. Three times, the original text mentions falling but does not use a Greek word normally rendered as worship. The Bible records only one expression of worship by Jesus' disciples before His resurrection and three after He rose from the dead. On six occasions in heaven, twenty-four elders fell facedown to express a consistent precedent for worship.

Groups of New Testament Worshipers					
Worshipers	Times	Greek	Gesture	NAS Verse	
The Magi	1	Proskuneo	Fell to the ground	Mat 2:11	
Samaritan Fathers	1	Proskuneo	Unspecified	John 4:20	
Unclean spirits	1*	Prospipto	Fell down	Mark 3:11	
Disciples of Jesus	In a boat At sea	1	Proskuneo	Saying, "You are certainly God's Son"	Mat 14:33
	After Jesus'	1	Proskuneo	Unspecified	Mat 28:17

Groups of New Testament Worshipers					
Worshippers		Times	Greek	Gesture	NAS Verse
	Resurrection				
	At Jesus' Ascension	1	Proskuneo		Luke 24:52
Mary Magdalene with Mary (mother of James)		1	Proskuneo	Grasped Jesus' feet after Resurrection	Mat 28:9
The Angels		1	Proskuneo	Fell on their face	Rev 7:11
Twenty-four Elders in Heaven		5	Proskuneo	Fell down or Fell on their face	Rev 4:10
			Proskuneo		Rev 5:14
			Proskuneo		Rev 7:11
			Proskuneo		Rev 11:16
			Proskuneo		Rev 19:4
		1*	Pipto	Fell down	Rev 5:8
Four Living Creatures		2	Proskuneo	Fell down	Rev 7:11
			Proskuneo	Fell down and worshiped saying, "Amen. Hallelujah"	Rev 19:4
		1*	Pipto	Fell down	Rev 5:8

** Indicates falling or bowing but not translated from a word commonly rendered worship, such as proskuneo*