

Swept off your Feet

Beyond Worship-as-Usual

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CHAPTER 9

Serving as Worship

“Worship” and “serve” appear together 28 times in the NAS version (25X’s OT and 3X’s NT). Throughout the Bible, this dual association invariably refers to false gods or idols. In one notable exception from parallel Gospel accounts, Jesus tells Satan, “You shall **worship** the LORD your God and **serve** Him only.”

In the Old Testament, the NAS translates the Hebrew verb *`abad* 200 times using variations of the word “serve”. Another 77 times, it translates *`abad* with words like labor, work, slave or enslave, bondage, perform, do, cultivate, and till. Of the 13 times that NAS translators render this word “worship”, only 6 refer to God. In each of these references, the NKJ (and at times the NIV and ESV) deviates from the NAS by translating *`abad* as serve or sacrifice.

Similar to the Hebrew word *`abad*, the NAS translates the Greek verb *latreuo* using variations of “serve” 18 times, and “worship” 3 times (i.e., 3 out of 21 times). The NAS also renders the noun *latreia* as service 2 times, divine worship 2 times, and service of worship once.

Old Testament Service Construed as Worship (~6 references)

| Worshippers | Times | Association | NAS Verse |
|--------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Moses | 1 | God told Moses he would serve/worship on Sinai after the Exodus | Exo 3:12 |
| Moses, Aaron, and Israel | 1 | Pharaoh commanded Israel to go serve/worship after the Passover | Exo 12:31 |
| Israel | 1 | God commands service/worship after they enter the Promised Land | Deu 6:13 |

| Worshippers | Times | Association | NAS Verse |
|-------------------------|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Kings | 1 | Exhortation for kings to reverently serve/worship the Lord | Psa 2:11 |
| Egyptians | 1 | After the Lord reveals Himself to Egypt, they will serve/worship with sacrifice and offering | Isa 19:21 |
| Egyptians and Assyrians | 1 | Assyrians will come to Egypt on a high-way to serve/worship | Isa 19:23 |

NAS translators render *`abad* as worship 6 out of 290 times

1. From the burning bush, God told Moses that he would deliver the Israelites from Egyptian slavery and that they would *`abad* [NAS, NIV “worship” or NKJ and ESV “serve”] Him on Mount Horeb.

Exo 3:12 And He said, "Certainly I will be with you [Moses], and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall **worship** [*`abad*, NKJ and ESV = serve] God at this mountain."

2. Pharaoh urged Moses and Aaron to take the Israelites away to *`abad* [NAS, NIV “worship” or NKJ and ESV “serve”] the LORD.

Exo 12:31 Then he [Pharaoh] called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, "Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, **worship** [*`abad*, NKJ and ESV = serve] the LORD, as you have said.

3. A commandment to *`abad* [NAS “worship” or NKJ, NIV, and ESV “serve”]

Deu 6:13 “You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall **worship** [*`abad*, NKJ, NIV, and ESV = serve] Him and swear by His name.

4. An exhortation to *`abad* [NAS “worship” or NKJ, NIV, and ESV “serve”]

Psa 2:11 Worship [*`abad*, NKJ, NIV, and ESV = serve] the LORD with **reverence** [*yir'ah* means fear (of God), respect, reverence, piety] And rejoice with trembling.

5. A prophetic proclamation stating that Egypt will know the LORD and *`abad* [NAS “worship” with sacrifice and offering or NKJ “make sacrifice” and offering].

Isa 19:21 Thus the LORD will make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day. They will even **worship** [*`abad*, NKJ = make sacrifice] with sacrifice and offering, and will make a vow to the LORD and perform it.

6. A prophetic proclamation stating that the Egyptians will *`abad* [NAS “worship” or NKJ “serve”] with the Assyrians.

Isa 19:23 In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria, and the Egyptians will **worship** [*`abad*, NKJ = serve] with the Assyrians.

New Testament Worship Construed as Service (~6 references)

| Worshippers | Times | Association | NAS Verse |
|-------------------|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| True circumcision | 1 | Service/worship performed in Spirit rather than the flesh | Phil 3:3 |
| Brethren in Rome | 1 | Become a living sacrifice—a spiritual service of worship | Rom 12:1 |
| Old Covenant | 1 | Regulations of divine worship | Heb 9:1 |
| Levites | 1 | Performing the divine worship | Heb 9:6 |
| Old Covenant | 1 | Inferiority of gifts and sacrifices offered for sin according to law | Heb 9:9 |
| Old Covenant | 1 | Inferiority of animal sacrifices | Heb 10:2 |

NAS Translators render *latreuo* as worship (er, ers) 3 out of 21 times

- Phil 3:3** for we are the true circumcision, who **worship** [*latreuo*] in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,
- Heb 9:9** ...both gifts and sacrifices are offered [in the Tabernacle] which cannot make the **worshiper** [*latreuo*] perfect in conscience, [NKJ = him who performed the service]
- Heb 10:2** Otherwise, would they [animal sacrifices] not have ceased to be offered, because the **worshippers** [*latreuo*], having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?

NAS Translators render *latreia* as worship 3 out of 5 times

- Heb 9:1** ...the first covenant had regulations of **divine worship** [*latreia*] ...”
- Heb 9:6** ...the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle, performing the **divine worship** [*latreia*]
- Ro 12:1** ...present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual **service of worship** [*latreia*].

NKJ ...your reasonable service

NIV ...your spiritual act of worship

ESV...your spiritual worship

Worship as a Formalized Expression in a Corporate Setting

The following references establish an association between worship (so rendered at times by NAS translators from the Greek word *latreia*) and religious services rendered in the temple. This concept institutionalizes worship by emphasizing patterns of behavior performed under the leadership of authorized individuals, in particular locations, according to specific traditions or regulations, e.g., a “church service” or “worship service”.

Heb 9:1 Now even the first covenant had **regulations of divine worship** [*latreia*] and the earthly sanctuary.”

Heb 9:6 Now when these things [the fixtures and furnishings in the Tabernacle] have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle, performing the **divine worship** [*latreia*, to carry on their ministry (NIV)],

Ro 9:4 ...to whom [the Israelites] belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the **temple service** [*latreia*] and the promises,

The Jews in Corinth accused Paul of persuading others to “worship” contrary to the law. Bringing this case before the Roman proconsul of Achaia implies legal features associated with this activity. Roman and Judaic laws governed various expressions of religious practice. In this case, “worship” (so rendered by NAS translators from *sebomai*) entails definitive activities associated with God-fearing devotion.

Ac 18:13 ...“This man [Paul] persuades men to **worship** [*sebomai*] God contrary to the law.”

Jesus criticized religious Pharisees and teachers of the law for promoting an empty devotion based on human traditions.

Mat 15:9 & Mark 7:7 'But in vain do they **worship** [*sebomai*] me, **teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.**'”

This statement possibly refers to Isaiah’s prophetic rebuke:

Isa 29:13 Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with **their words** And honor Me with their **lip service**, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their **reverence** [*yir'ah* means awesome, respect, reverence, piety, fear, terror] for Me **consists of tradition learned by rote**,

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