

# **Faithful Service/Worship**

## **(Greek Word Study of Latreia & Latreuō)**

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### **Introduction**

Several Greek word families are used in Scripture to communicate the concept of worship. Here, we focus upon one in particular: The verb *latreuō*, which means “to serve,” and describes the carrying out of religious duties. So likewise, the noun *latreia*, derived from *latreuō*, refers to “service/worship” that is offered to God. Let us consider the various occurrences of these words, and the manner in which they are used in Sacred Scripture.

This study helps dispel a modern misconception surrounding Romans 12:1, namely, that all of life is worship, and no pattern applies to its expression. The service/worship communicated by *latreia* & *latreuō* may vary from dispensation to dispensation, but always requires submission to the will and word of God. Certainly, serving God impacts every aspect of life; however, we are obligated to follow the divine pattern revealed in the Bible. This applies to the work, worship and organization of the church; it applies to the home and family; it applies to our personal conduct, and interaction with others.

Some have great culinary ability, being able to prepare appetizing and nutritious meals. Does such talent allow someone to substitute sourdough loaves and smoothies for the elements of the Lord’s Supper that are prescribed in the New Testament, i.e., unleaven bread and fruit of the vine? No, God’s pattern must be respected.

Some have great musical ability, being able to make melodious sounds using various mechanical instruments of music. Does such talent allow someone to substitute guitar and mandolin for the type music that is prescribed in the New Testament, i.e., singing, and making melody in our hearts? No, God’s pattern must be respected.

Some have great organizational ability, being able to create effective management structures that streamline business operations. Does such talent allow someone to substitute a hierarchical structure for the type organization that is prescribed in the New Testament, i.e., independent & autonomous churches organized under oversight of local elderships? No, God’s pattern must be respected.

### **The Noun Latreia**

Thomas defines the Greek noun λατρεία [*latreia*] as derived from *latreuō* [to serve], meaning “service” [2999]. BDAG say it means “in cultic usage, service/worship (of God).” This word occurs 5x in the NT (John 16:2; Rom. 9:4; 12:1; Heb. 9:1; 9:6).

*John 16:2 ... 2 “They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering **\*service** to God. (NASB95)*

*Romans 9:4 ... 4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple **\*service** and the promises, (NASB95)*

*Romans 12:1 ... 1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of **\*worship**. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 9:1 ... 1 Now even the first covenant had regulations of **\*divine \*worship** and the earthly sanctuary. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 9:6 ... 6 Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle performing the **\*divine \*worship**, (NASB95)*

### **The Verb Latreuō**

Thomas defines the Greek verb λατρεύω [latreuō] as derived from *latris* [a hired servant], meaning “to serve” [3000]. BDAG say it means “to serve, in our literature only of the carrying out of religious duties, especially of a cultic nature, by human beings.” Louw and Nida say it means “to perform religious rites as a part of worship” [53.14].

This word occurs 21x in the NT (Matt. 4:10; Luke 1:74; 2:37; 4:8; Acts 7:7; 7:42; 24:14; 26:7; 27:23; Rom. 1:9; 1:25; Phil. 3:3; 2 Tim. 1:3; Heb. 8:5; 9:9, 14; 10:2; 12:28; 13:10; Rev. 7:15; 22:3).

*Matthew 4:10 ... 10 Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and **\*serve** Him only.’” (NASB95)*

*Luke 1:74 ... 74 To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might **\*serve** Him without fear, (NASB95)*

*Luke 2:37 ... 37 and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, **\*serving** night and day with fastings and prayers. (NASB95)*

*Luke 4:8 ... 8 Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and **\*serve** Him only.’” (NASB95)*

*Acts 7:7 ... 7 “ ‘And whatever nation to which they will be in bondage I Myself will judge,’ said God, ‘and after that they will come out and **\*serve** Me in this place.’ (NASB95)*

*Acts 7:42 ... 42 “But God turned away and delivered them up to **\*serve** the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, ‘It was not to Me that you offered victims and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, was it, O house of Israel?’ (NASB95)*

*Acts 24:14 ... 14 “But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do **\*serve** the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; (NASB95)*

*Acts 26:7 ... 7 the promise to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly **\*serve** God night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews. (NASB95)*

*Acts 27:23 ... 23 “For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I **\*serve** stood before me, (NASB95)*

*Romans 1:9 ... 9 For God, whom I **\*serve** in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, (NASB95)*

*Romans 1:25 ... 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and **\*served** the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (NASB95)*

*Philippians 3:3 ... 3 for we are the true circumcision, who **\*worship** in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, (NASB95)*

*2 Timothy 1:3 ... 3 I thank God, whom I **\*serve** with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 8:5 ... 5 who **\*serve** a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, “See,” He says, “that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.” (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 9:9 ... 9 which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the **\*worshiper** perfect in conscience, (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 9:14 ... 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to **\*serve** the living God? (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 10:2 ... 2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the **\*worshippers**, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 12:28 ... 28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may **\*offer** to God an acceptable **\*service** with reverence and awe; (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 13:10 ... 10 We have an altar from which those who **\*serve** the tabernacle have no right to eat. (NASB95)*

*Revelation 7:15 ... 15 “For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they \*serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. (NASB95)*

*Revelation 22:3 ... 3 There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will \*serve Him; (NASB95)*

## **Temple Service**

The aforementioned noun describes the temple service of the Mosaic dispensation (Rom. 9:1-5, esp. vs. 4; Heb. 9:1-7, esp. vs. 1 & 6). The verb is used in a similar manner.

*Romans 9:1-5 (NASB95) — 1 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple \*service and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.*

*Hebrews 9:1-7 (NASB95) — 1 Now even the first covenant had regulations of \*divine \*worship and the earthly sanctuary. 2 For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. 3 Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, 4 having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron’s rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant; 5 and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail. 6 Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle performing the \*divine \*worship, 7 but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.*

Consider the example of Anna who, living under the Law, “never left the temple, \*serving God night and day with fastings and prayers” (Luke 2:36-38).

*Luke 2:36-38 (NASB95) — 36 And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, \*serving night and day with fastings and prayers. 38 At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.*

The Law of Moses was established at Mt Sinai. God sent Moses to deliver Israel from Egypt, saying that afterwards “they will come out and \*serve Me in this place” (Acts 7:6-7; cf. Exod. 3:10-12).

*Acts 7:6-7 (NASB95) — 6 “But God spoke to this effect, that his descendants would be aliens in a foreign land, and that they would be enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years. 7 “ ‘And whatever nation to which they will be in bondage I Myself will judge,’ said God, ‘and after that they will come out and **\*serve** Me in this place.’*

*Exodus 3:10-12 (NASB95) — 10 “Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.” 11 But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?” 12 And He said, “Certainly I will be with you, 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 God at this mountain.”*

Although the Mosaic system was established according to God’s pattern, it fell short of the ideal because its priests **\*serve** a copy and shadow of the heavenly things (Heb. 8:4-5).

*Hebrews 8:4-5 (NASB95) — 4 Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; 5 who **\*serve** a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, “See,” He says, “that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.”*

The animal sacrifices of the Mosaic system were inadequate to make the **\*worshiper** perfect in conscience (Heb. 9:6-10). In contrast, the perfect sacrifice of Jesus cleanses our conscience from dead works to **\*serve** the living God (Heb. 9:13-14).

*Hebrews 9:6-10 (NASB95) — 6 Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle performing the divine worship, 7 but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. 8 The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing, 9 which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the **\*worshiper** perfect in conscience, 10 since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.*

*Hebrews 9:11-14 (NASB95) — 11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; 12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to **\*serve** the living God?*

Furthermore, the sacrifices of the Law were unable to offer permanent forgiveness. “Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the **\*worshipers**, having once been cleansed,

would no longer have had consciousness of sins?” In contrast, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 10:1-10).

*Hebrews 10:1-10 (NASB95) — 1 For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. 2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the \*worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? 3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. 5 Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, “Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, But a body You have prepared for Me; 6 In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have taken no pleasure. 7 “Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come (In the scroll of the book it is written of Me) To do Your will, O God.’ “ 8 After saying above, “Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have not desired, nor have You taken pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the Law), 9 then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will.” He takes away the first in order to establish the second. 10 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

## **Christian Service**

The Greek noun under consideration describes Christian service of the Gospel era (Rom. 12:1). The verb is also used of the worship that we offer.

*Romans 12:1 ... 1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of \*worship. (NASB95)*

Consider the example of Paul, who was called as a minister to the Gentiles, and served God faithfully in preaching the gospel (Acts 27:23-24; Rom. 1:9-10).

*Acts 27:23-24 (NASB95) — 23 “For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I \*serve stood before me, 24 saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.’*

*Romans 1:9-10 (NASB95) — 9 For God, whom I \*serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, 10 always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.*

Christian worship requires exclusivity, in its divine object: “You shall worship the Lord your God, and \*serve Him only” (Matt. 4:8-10; Luke 4:5-8), and also in doctrine and dispensational accuracy: there is an essential difference between truth and error (Phil. 3:1-3; Heb. 13:9-10).

*Matthew 4:8-10 (NASB95) — 8 Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; 9 and he said to Him, “All*

*these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.” 10 Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and \*serve Him only.’ “*

*Luke 4:5-8 (NASB95) — 5 And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said to Him, “I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. 7 “Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.” 8 Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and \*serve Him only.’ “*

*Philippians 3:1-3 (NASB95) — 1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you. 2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; 3 for we are the true circumcision, who \*worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,*

*Hebrews 13:9-10 (NASB95) — 9 Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited. 10 We have an altar from which those who \*serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.*

Faithful service/worship requires courage and conviction (Luke 1:74-75; Acts 24:14-15).

*Luke 1:74-75 (NASB95) — 74 To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might \*serve Him without fear, 75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.*

*Acts 24:14-15 (NASB95) — 14 “But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do \*serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; 15 having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.*

Faithful service/worship requires clarity of conscience (2 Tim. 1:3-4).

*2 Timothy 1:3-4 (NASB95) — 3 I thank God, whom I \*serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, 4 longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy.*

Faithful service/worship requires recognition of the kingdom/church concept (Heb. 12:28-29).

*Hebrews 12:28-29 (NASB95) — 28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may \*offer to God an acceptable \*service with reverence and awe; 29 for our God is a consuming fire.*

## **Misguided Service**

This noun describes the misguided service offered by those who reject the truth (John 16:1-4, esp. vs. 2). The verb is similarly employed.

*John 16:1-4 (NASB95) — 1 “These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. 2 “They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering **\*service** to God. 3 “These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. 4 “But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.*

The pagan idolatry of both the Gentiles and the Jews provides examples of misguided and unfaithful service/worship (Rom. 1:25; Acts 7:42).

*Romans 1:25 (NASB95) — 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and **\*served** the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*

*Acts 7:42 (NASB95) — 42 “But God turned away and delivered them up to **\*serve** the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, ‘It was not to Me that you offered victims and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, was it, O house of Israel?’*

In like manner, the Jews continued to cling to the Mosaic system long after it had been set aside by a new and better covenant (Acts 26:4-7; cf. Rom. 10:1-3).

*Acts 26:4-7 (NASB95) — 4 “So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem; 5 since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion. 6 “And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; 7 the promise to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly **\*serve** God night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews.*

*Romans 10:1-3 (NASB95) — 1 Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. 2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. 3 For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.*

## **Conclusion**

Faithful service/worship was required in the temple service of the Mosaic dispensation. It is required in the Christian service of the Gospel era. It is not reflected in the misguided service of those who reject the truth.



The responsibility of faithful service/worship extends beyond this life into eternity (Rev. 7:15-17; 22:1-5). If you hope to share in the bliss of heaven, you must respect the authority of God/Christ today (Matt. 28:18-20; Col. 3:17).

*Revelation 7:15-17 (NASB95) — 15 “For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they \*serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. 16 “They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; 17 for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”*

*Revelation 22:1-5 (NASB95) — 1 Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, 2 in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will \*serve Him; 4 they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. 5 And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.*

*Matthew 28:18-20 (NASB95) — 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

*Colossians 3:17 (NASB95) — 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.*