

Faithful Service/Worship

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7/17/2011

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*, occurring 21x in the NT, which means “to serve,” and describes the carrying out of religious duties. So likewise, the noun *latreia*, occurring 5 times, 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., unleavened 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.

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. 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).

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). 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).

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).

Furthermore, the sacrifices of the Law were unable to offer permanent forgiveness. “Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the ***worshippers**, 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).

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. 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).

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).

Faithful service/worship requires courage and conviction (Luke 1:74-75; Acts 24:14-15). Faithful service/worship requires clarity of conscience (2 Tim. 1:3-4). Faithful service/worship requires recognition of the kingdom/church concept (Heb. 12:28-29).

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

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).

Thought Questions

- (1) List some of the different translations of Romans 12:1.
- (2) Why did God give the Mosaic Law?
- (3) What were its benefits? What were its limitations?
- (5) How is the Gospel of Christ superior to the Law of Moses?
- (6) What is God’s assessment of will-worship, false worship, or worship that is offered according to human traditions?