

The Meaning of Worship in Scripture

Text

Luke 10:25-26 ²⁵*And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”*

²⁶*He said to him, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?”*

Memory Verse

2 Tim. 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

Introduction

To understand worship, we need to understand the words behind it. Hermeneutics is the study of how to interpret Scripture. When we look at the original Hebrew and Greek words for “worship” we see that it means more than singing or bowing. It is about serving God with our whole life.

God is Spirit, and He seeks those who worship Him in Spirit and truth. True worship affects every part of life – our work, our family, and how we treat others. As the Bible says, “Whatever you do,

CHAPTER 1

do it all for the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). The prophets also made this clear: God desires obedience and mercy more than sacrifices alone (Micah 6:6-8; Ps. 50:8-15, 23).

Objective

To look at the main Hebrew and Greek words translated “worship” and see what they teach us about how God wants to be worshipped.

Presentation

1. Hebrew Words for Worship

‘Abad’ – To Serve

This word primarily means “to serve” and carries the idea of total loyalty to God’s will.

Abraham’s life is an example of this kind of devoted service (Gen. 14:4; 15:13; Deut. 11:13-14). Where true worship happens, it leads to practical service for the good of others.

‘Hishtachavah’ – To Bow Down

This word means “to bow down” or “to do obeisance”, often in the context of prayer and sacrifice (Gen. 19:1-2; 22:5-7; 33:1-3). It expresses humility before God.

CHAPTER 1

‘Saghad’ – To Prostrate

This word means “to fall prostrate” (Isa. 44:15,17; Dan. 2:46). It was often used when people bowed before visible objects, but the heart of worship is always directed to God alone.

2. Greek Words for Worship

‘Latreuo’ – To Render Sacred Service

This means to serve God in a way that is approved by Him through Scripture. (Luke 1:74-75; 2:37; 4:8; Rom. 9:4). It is worship expressed in obedience and service.

‘Proskuneo’ – To Bow and Pay Homage

Similar to the Hebrew, ‘Hishtachavah’, this means to bow down, worship, or pay homage (Matt. 18:26).

This is the word used when Satan asked Christ to worship him (Matt. 4:8-9), and in Revelation for the worship of the beast (Rev. 13:4, 15-17; 14:9-11).

‘Eusebeo’ – To Revere Godly

This means to venerate, revere, or give godly devotion (Acts 17:23).

Godly devotion becomes credible when it is shown in obedience to His Word. As Samuel said, “To obey is better than sacrifice.” (1 Sam. 15:22)

CHAPTER 1

‘Threskeuo’ – Religious Practice

This word refers to a form of worship, whether directed to the true God or a false one (Acts 26:5; Col. 2:18).

‘Sebomai’ – To Venerate, Revere

This means to worship and revere God. The noun, ‘sebasma’, refers to the one who is worshipped.

Conclusion

True worship combines reverence for God with service to Him and others. It is not limited to rituals. It is a life of obedience, service, and devotion to God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. What is the benefit of studying hermeneutics?

- * It helps us correctly to understand and apply Scripture so that we can obey God.

2 Tim. 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

CHAPTER 1

2 Tim. 3:16 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

2. What is the difference between “worship” and “service”?

- * In Scripture, the two are closely linked. “Worship” often means bowing, revering, and honouring God. “Service” means living out that worship in obedience and practical devotion to God and others. True worship always results in service.

Matt. 4:10 *For it is written ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’*

Rom. 12:1 (NIV) *... Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

1 Sam. 15:22 *To obey is better than sacrifice.*

3. Give one Hebrew and one Greek word for worship.

- * Hebrew: ‘Hishtachavah’ – to bow down, to do obeisance (Gen. 22:5).
- * Greek: ‘Proskuneo’ – to bow down, to pay homage (Matt. 2:2).

CHAPTER 1

4. According to 1 Sam. 15:22, how does obedience connect to worship?

- * God values obedience more than outward sacrifices. True worship is shown by doing what God commands, not just by religious acts.

1 Sam. 15:22 (NIV) *Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.*

Prayer

Lord, open our eyes to understand Your word.
Teach us to worship You in spirit and truth, and to show that worship in obedience and service every day. Amen.