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προσκυνέω G4686 (*proskyneō*), worship, do obeisance to, prostrate oneself, do reverence to; **προσκυνητής** G4687 (*proskynētēs*), a worshipper.

CL The basic meaning of *proskyneō*, in the opinion of most scholars, is to kiss. The prefix indicates a connection with cultic practices going back beyond Gk. history. On Egyptian reliefs worshippers are represented with outstretched hand throwing a kiss to (*pros-*) the deity. Among the Greeks the vb. is a technical term for the adoration of the gods, meaning to fall down, prostrate oneself, adore on one's knees. Probably it came to have this meaning because in order to kiss the earth (i.e. the earth deity) or the image of a god, one had to cast oneself on the ground. Later *proskyneō* was also used in connection with the deification of rulers and the Roman emperor cult. In addition to the external act of prostrating oneself in worship, *proskyneō* can denote the corresponding inward attitude of reverence and humility.

OT In the overwhelming majority of cases in the LXX *proskyneō* translates the Heb. *šāhâh* in the hithpael, meaning to bow down, and is used both of bowing down before men and of worship: Gen. 18:2; 19:1; 22:5; 23:7, 12; 24:16, 48, 52; 27:29; 33:3, 6 f., 9 f.; 42:6; 43:28; 47:31; 48:12; 49:8; Exod. 4:31; 11:8; 12:27; 18:7; 20:5; 23:24; 24:1; 32:8; 33:10; 34:8, 14; Lev. 26:1; Num. 22:31; 25:2; Deut. 4:19; 5:9; 8:19; 11:16; 17:3; 26:10; 29:25(26); 30:17; Jos. 23:7, 16; Jdg. 2:12, 17, 19; 7:15; Ruth 2:10; 1 Sam. 1:3, 19; 2:36; 15:25, 30 f.; 20:41; 24:9; 25:23, 41; 28:14; 2 Sam. 1:2; 9:6, 8; 12:20; 14:4, 22, 33; 15:5, 32; 16:4; 18:21, 28; 24:20; 1 Ki. 1:16, 23, 31, 47, 53; 9:6, 9; 16:31; 22:54; 2 Ki. 2:15; 4:37; 5:18; 17:16, 35 f.; 18:22; 19:37; 21:3, 21; 1 Chr. 16:29; 21:21; 29:20; 2 Chr. 7:3, 19, 22; 20:18; 24:17; 25:14; 29:28 ff.; 32:12; 33:3; Ezr. 9:47; Neh. 8:6; 9:3, 6; Job 1:20; Pss. 5:7; 22:27, 29 (21:27); 29:3 (28:3); 45:12 (44:12); 66:4 (65:4); 72:11 (71:11); 81:9 (80:9); 86:9 (85:9); 95:6 (94:6); 96:9 (95:9); 99:5, 9 (98:5); 106:19 (105:19); 132:7 (131:7); 138:2 (137:2); Mic. 5:13; Zeph. 1:5; 2:11; Zech. 14:16; Isa. 2:8, 20; 27:13; 37:38; 44:15, 17; 45:14; 46:6; 49:7, 23; 66:23; Jer. 1:16; 8:2; 13:10; 16:11; 22:9; 25:6; 26:2 (33:2); Ezek. 8:16; 46:2 f., 9. In the Aram. portion of Dan. it translates *s^egîd*, pay homage to (Dan. 2:46; 3:5 ff., 10 ff., 14, 18, 28 [Dan. 95]; cf. also Isa. 44:15, 17, 19). In Dan. 6:27 (26) it translates *zûā'*, tremble. It is used for *kāra'*, kneel down, in Est. 3:2, 5 in conjunction with *šāhâh*; for *nāšaq*, kiss, in 1 Ki. 19:18; and *'ābad*, serve, in Ps. 7:7 (6:7). It occurs without Heb. equivalent in the apocryphal books and occasionally in canonical writings: Deut. 6:13; 10:20; 32:43; Jdg. 2:2; 6:19; 1 Ki. 2:13; Tob. 5:13; Jud. 5:8; 6:18; 8:18; 10:8, 23; 13:17; 14:7; 16:18; Est. 4:17; 8:13; Ep. Jer. 5 f.; Dan. 6:28(27); Bel 3, 23; 1 Macc. 4:55; 4 Macc. 5:12. The noun *proskynēsis*, worship, which is absent from the NT occurs only in the apocrypha (Sir. 50:21; 3 Macc. 3:7).

In the LXX *proskyneō* translates *hištaḥ^awâh* and (almost exclusively in Dan.) *s^egîd*, both with the basic meaning to bend down, stoop, bow. Although in profane Gk. *proskyneō* is generally used trans., it hardly ever takes an acc. in the LXX, being followed instead by a prepositional phrase as a translation of *l^e: epi. . .*, to the earth (e.g. Gen. 18:2); *enantion. . .*, before the people (e.g. Gen. 23:12 and passim); *enōpion. . .*, before God (Ps. 22:27); *pros. . .*, towards thy holy temple (Ps. 5:7); alternatively there may be a dat. construction (e.g. Gen. 24:26). This Hebraism marks off the adoration of Yahweh from heathen worship, in which the the worshipper has no sense of having to keep his distance from the deity. The God of Israel is worshipped without images and therefore is not within the grasp of the worshipper. *proskyneō* retains its physical sense of bending, however, except that this is understood as bowing to the will of the exalted One (cf. Exod. 12:27 f.). As folding or crossing the hands and arms denotes the suppliant's mental concentration, and as the lifting up of outstretched hands expresses the fact that he is making a request, in the same way the physical act of bending indicates his readiness to bow to the will of the One whom he approaches in this manner. When *proskyneō* refers to men, it always indicates reverence shown to a person superior in position or power (cf. 2 Sam. 18:21). However, the fact that certain limits were always observed in this matter is shown by Est. 3:2, 5, where a Jew, on peril of his life, refuses to prostrate himself before a heathen prince.

NT 1 In the NT the verb occurs 59 times, of which 24 are in Rev., 11 in the Gospels of Jn. and 9 in Matt. ("the Gospel of the King"), and takes either acc. or dat. without any difference of meaning. The OT sense is taken up and further developed, except that now it denotes exclusively worship addressed (or which should be addressed) to God or to Jesus Christ (even in Matt. 18:26 the king is a symbolic figure for God). In Acts 10:25 f.; Rev. 19:10; 22:8 f. it is expressly stated that worship is to be offered to God alone, not to an apostle (even such a prominent apostle as Peter!), or even to an angelic being. Hence, whenever obeisance is made before Jesus, the thought is either explicit or implicit that he is king (Matt. 2:2), Lord (Matt. 8:12), the Son of God (Matt. 14:33), One who can act with divine omnipotence (e.g. Matt. 14:33; Mk. 5:6; 15:19). For that reason obeisance is often linked with a request for help in sore need. On the one hand, it intensifies the request, while, on the other hand, it is a sign of faith in the divine helper and redeemer, a faith certain of being heard (e.g. Matt. 8:2; 9:18; 15:25). In Jn. 9:38 obeisance is nothing less than the outward reflex action of faith: to believe means to adore Jesus, to recognize him as Lord, to render him homage as king. Thus obeisance is especially appropriate before the risen and exalted Lord (Matt. 28:9, 17; Lk. 24:52).

When Satan, reversing the true order of things, requires obeisance from Jesus (Matt. 4:9; Lk. 4:7), he proves himself by this very act to be God's great adversary, who would usurp that which is due to God alone (Matt. 4:10; Lk. 4:8) and so overthrow all the good purposes and ordinances of God.

2 In this context obeisance is a sign of man's fundamentally religious nature: his worship shows who his god is, whether it be the true God, or idols, demons, even Satan himself (cf. Rev. 9:20; 13:4, 8, 12). For man's relation to God is expressed principally in worship, and above all in prayer. The call to conversion can therefore be put in the form: "Worship God!" i.e. recognize him in all his power and glory as creator and judge, acknowledge his exclusive sovereign rights and claim upon you (Rev. 14:7).

3 Where *proskyneō* is used absolutely it means to share in public worship, to offer prayers (e.g. Jn. 12:20; Acts 8:27; 24:11), whence, in Rev., *proskyneō* comes to denote a particular kind of prayer, namely adoration. Its characteristic features find expression in the various hymns of adoration found throughout Rev. (Rev. 4:8-11; 5:8-10, 12-14; 7:10-12; 11:15-18; 12:10 f.; 15:3 f.; 16:5-7; 19:1-7): it is addressed to God himself (or to Jesus Christ), is concerned with his being (i.e. not with his gifts as in thanksgiving) and with his works in a world-wide context (creation, Rev. 4:8-11; rule, 15:3 f.; 16:5-7; redemption, 5:8-10; consummation, 11:15-18). The hymns make use of ever-varied language and ideas, constantly finding new titles of dignity with which to praise God, and ascribing to him the most exalted merits and attributes (eternity, omnipotence, honour, wisdom, holiness, power etc.), in a faltering attempt to confess his name. Frequently this takes the form of royal acclamation: "Worthy art thou!" (Rev. 4:11; 5:9, 12), "Salvation!" (7:10), interspersed with ejaculatory prayers: ("Hallelujah!" "Amen!" 7:12; 19:1, 3, 4; Amen). Through all these hymns there runs a gloriously universal strain, and in the face of adoration such as this, human petitions and thanksgivings merely fade away into silence (cf. Matt. 6:13b).

4 The noun *proskynētēs*, worshipper, occurs only in Jn. 4:23 in the context of Jesus' reply to the woman of Samaria: "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming and now is, when the true worshippers [*hoi alēthinoi proskynētai*] will worship the Father in spirit and truth [*proskynēsousin tō Patri en pneumati kai alētheia*], for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth [*pneuma ho theos, kai tous proskynountas en pneumati kai alētheia dei proskynein*]" (Jn. 4:22 ff.). Earlier the woman had declared that her ancestors had worshipped on "this mountain", i.e. Mt. Gerizim (v.20). The allusion is to the role Gerizim played in Samaritan worship. In the Samaritan Pentateuch Joshua is instructed to build a shrine there (Deut. 27:4). The Samaritans made worship on Gerizim part of the Decalogue (cf. however 2 Chr. 6:6). (On Samaritan thought and practice see J. Macdonald, *The Theology of the Samaritans*, 1964.) Jesus had countered the woman's assertion of her Samaritan faith by declaring that "the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father" (Jn. 4:21).

Jesus' words are widely taken to be a reference to man's spirit and the need to take up a right personal attitude in worship as the continuance of mere custom and ritual (cf. L. Morris, *The Gospel according to John, NLC*, 1971, 270 f.). Such a meaning might be supported by the Hellenistic spiritualizing of Philo (*Quod Det. Pot. Ins.* 21;

Vit.Mos. 2, 108; *Spec.Leg.* 1, 271; *Plant.* 108). On the other hand, R. E. Brown urges that it is the Spirit of God that is meant here, and that one can regard “spirit and truth” almost as a hendiadys equivalent to “Spirit of truth” (*The Gospel according to John, Anchor Bible*, I, 1966, 180). This would, moreover, fit better the train of thought. For in the context both “this mountain” and “Jerusalem” have come to stand for ways in which men have seen fit to worship God in ways which were not real worship acceptable to God. But in the coming age men will worship God in the true way which he himself has chosen and provided, i.e. in and through himself (cf. also the Johannine teaching on the Spirit, Jn. 1:32 f.; 3:5-8, 34; 6:63; 7:39; 11:33; 13:21; 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:13; 20:22; and the paraclete, Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; Advocate, art. παράκλητος). “In true worship there is an encounter with God for which God must make man capable by his grace” (R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, I, 1968, 437). Schnackenburg sees confirmation of this interpretation by similar usage at Qumran: “Then God will purify all the deeds of man by his truth and he will cleanse the frame of man. He will eradicate the perverse spirit from within his flesh, and cleanse him by holy spirit from all his wicked deeds. He will pour out on him the spirit of truth like purifying water . . .” (1QS 4:20 f.; cf. 3:6 ff.; 8:5 f.; 9:3-6; 1QH 7:6 f.; 12:11 f.; 13:18 f.; 14:25; 16:6 f., 11 f.; 17:26; cf. also R. Schnackenburg, “Die Anbetung in Geist und Wahrheit (Joh 4, 23) im Lichte von Qumran-Texten”, *BZ* 3, 1959, 88-94; B. Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series*, 1, 1965, 44 ff., 119 f.).

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