

Praise and Worship

a Greek and Hebrew **Word Study**

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This is a short study on the theme of praise and worship in the bible. The words ‘praise’ and ‘worship’ occur many in the bible. However, in the original languages of the Old and New Testaments, Hebrew and Greek, there is not just one word for praise and one for worship—indeed in the Old Testament alone there are nine different Hebrew words that have all been rendered ‘praise’ in the Authorised Version (AV).

Below I present the various Hebrew and Greek words that have been translated as ‘praise’ and ‘worship’. For each word I give its definition and a few references to verses of scripture containing it. The number in square brackets is the word’s index number in *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* where a normal typeface, [1234], denotes a Hebrew word and and italic typeface, [*1234*], denotes a Greek one. Following the word’s index number and its spelling comes its pronunciation (transliteration). For both Greek and Hebrew I have given the pronunciation in italics. In each quotation I have given the English word or words that refer to the original word **this typeface**. Unless stated otherwise, the scriptures quoted are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). Sometimes, to make the meaning more clear, I have substituted certain phrases of the verse with their equivalents from the AV. When this occurs, the original wording of the NASB phrase is placed in square brackets.

After the definition and scripture quotations that employ the words ‘praise’ or ‘worship’ I show other verses that contain the same Hebrew/Greek words but which have been translated other than ‘praise’ or ‘worship’; these verses appear under the heading ‘Other renderings’. For example, the Hebrew word יָדָה (*yadah*), as well as being translated ‘praise’ is also rendered ‘make confession’ and ‘thank’ in the AV. This helps to build up a fuller understanding of the words and thus of praise and worship. For instance, to learn that a word rendered ‘praise’ is also translated ‘confessing’ gives us some interesting insight into the subject of praise.

I hope that this provides an interesting and helpful look at the root meanings of two words we tend to take for granted. It is quite unfortunate that we are not all Hebrew and Greek speakers as there is a wealth of linguistic and cultural meaning in the bible that has been hidden by the translation process.

Let’s look at the words praise and worship and dig up some treasure. I shall cover the subject of praise first and then worship.

Notes

Praise

יָדָה – *yadah* [3034]

To use, hold out, extend the hand. To revere/worship. From **יָד** (*yad*), an open hand indicating power (as opposed to the closed hand).

Ge. 29:35 ‘Now I will **praise** the Lord’.

Other renderings

Le. 26:40 ‘If they **confess** their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers...’

Ps. 32:5 ‘I acknowledge my sin to Thee, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said “I will **confess** my transgressions to the Lord”.’

1 Ch. 16:4 ‘And he appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the Lord, even to celebrate and to **thank** and praise the Lord God of Israel.’

2 Ch. 5:13 ‘And they are to stand every morning to **thank** and to praise the Lord, and likewise at evening.’

2 Sa. 22:50 ‘Therefore I will give **thanks** to Thee, O Lord, among the nations, and I will sing praises to Thy name.’

1 Ch. 16:34 ‘O give **thanks** to the Lord, for He is good, for his lovingkindness is everlasting.’

הִלֵּל – *hillool* [1974]

(From [1984]), a celebration of thanksgiving for the harvest.

Le. 19:24 ‘But in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, an offering of **praise** to the Lord.’

J'g. 9:27 'And they went out into the field and gathered the grapes of their vineyards and trod them, and **made merry** [held a festival]; and they went into the house of their God, and ate and drank and cursed Abimelech.'

Notes

תְּהִלָּה – *tehillah* [8416]
(From [1984]) laudation, a hymn.

Praise

De. 10:21 'He is your **praise** and He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen.'

Ps. 22:3 'Yet Thou art holy, O Thou who art enthroned upon [who inhabits] the **praises** of Israel.'

בָּרַךְ – *barach* [1288]
To kneel, by implication to bless God.

J'g. 5:2 'Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day saying, "that the leaders led in Israel, that the people volunteered to **praise** [bless] the Lord".'

Other renderings

2 Ki. 4:29 'Then the Lord said to Gehazi, "gird up your loins and take my staff in your hand, and go your way; if you meet any man, do not **salute** him, and if anyone **salutes** you, do not answer him; and lay my staff on the lad's face".'

2 Sa. 14:22 'And Joab fell on his face to the ground, prostrated himself and **thanked** [blessed] the king.'

Notes

הלל – *halal* [1984]
To be clear; to make a show, to boast, to rave, to celebrate.

I Ch. 16:4 ‘And he appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the Lord, even to celebrate and to thank and **praise** the Lord God of Israel.’

Neh. 12:24 ‘And the heads of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers opposite them, to **praise** and give thanks, as prescribed by David the man of God, division Corresponding to division.’

Other renderings

Ps. 34:23 ‘My soul shall make its **boast** in the Lord; the humble shall hear it and rejoice. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.’

Isa. 38:18 ‘For sheol cannot thank Thee, death cannot **celebrate** [praise] Thee.’

Ge. 12:15 ‘And Pharaoh’s officials saw her and **commended** [praised] her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken to Pharaoh’s house.’

I Ch. 16:10 ‘**Glor**y in His holy name; let the heart of those who seek the Lord be glad.’

Isa. 45:25 ‘In the Lord all the offspring of Israel will be justified and will **glory**.’

Ps. 78:63 ‘The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not **given to marriage**.’ (AV)

Or ‘Fire devoured His young men; and His virgins had no **wedding songs**.’ (NASB)

Job. 41:18 ‘his sneezes **flash forth light**, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning.’

This last rendering leads to an interesting comparison:

Isa. 14:12-14 ‘How you have fallen from heaven, O **star of the morning**, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High”.’

The phrase ‘star of the morning’ is translated from the word הַיְלֵל (*heylel* [1966]). הַיְלֵל (*heylel*) comes from הָלַל (*halal*) in the sense of brightness. In this passage the AV renders הַיְלֵל ‘Lucifer’, also known as Satan. It is interesting that Satan, who was the leader of worship in heaven, took the attributes of his character that reflected praise, celebration, raving, boasting and brightness (see definition of *halal* above) and turned them onto himself rather than to God. His boasting in the Lord has turned to pride and self worship, from which all sin ultimately stems.

This is an important lesson for all worshippers. Never forget the purpose of worship. For leaders this is especially important; do not let your boasting in the Lord turn into a prideful performance or show of your own abilities. Just see what this has done to a lot of rock stars. Small wonder they too are called ‘stars’.

זָמַר – *zamar* [2167]

To touch the strings or parts of a musical instrument; to make music accompanied by voice, hence to celebrate in music and song.

Ps. 21:13 ‘Be Thou exalted, O Lord, in Thy strength; we will sing and **praise** Thy power.’

Ps. 108:1 ‘My heart is steadfast, O God; I will sing, I will sing **praises**, even with my soul.’

Other renderings

Ps. 27:6 ‘And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me; and I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will **sing praises** to the Lord.’

Ps. 57:9 ‘I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord, among the peoples; I will **sing praises** to Thee among the nations.’

Notes

תִּדְוָה – *todah* [8426]

An extension of the hand; adoration; a choir of worshippers.

Ps. 42:4 ‘These things I remember, and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, with the voice of joy and **praise** [thanksgiving] a multitude keeping festival.’

Ps. 50:23 ‘He who offers a sacrifice of **praise** honors Me, and to him who orders his way aright I shall show the salvation of God.’

Other renderings

Jos. 7:19 ‘Then Josua said to Achan, “my son, I implore you, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, **make confession** to Him; and tell me what you have done. Do not hide it from me.”’

Ezr. 10:11 ‘Now, therefore, **make confession** to the Lord God of your fathers, and do His will; and separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives.’

Praise seems to involve confession: we need to be honest before Him to come into His presence. It is interesting to observe that the Old Testament uses only two words for confession, *yadah* and *todah*. That both these words are also translated ‘praise’ is worthy of note.

Jer. 17:26 ‘...bringing burnt offerings, sacrifices, grain offerings and incense, and bringing **sacrifices of praise** to the house of the Lord.’

Jer. 33:11 ‘...those who bring a **thank offering**.’

שָׁבַח – *shavach* [7623]

To address in a loud tone, that is, to pacify.

Ps. 63:3 ‘Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will **praise** Thee.’

Ps. 147:12 ‘**Praise** the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!’

Notes

Other renderings

Ec. 8:15 ‘So I **commended** pleasure, for there is nothing good under the sun except to eat and to drink and to be merry.’

I Ch. 16:35 ‘To give thanks to Thy holy name, and **glory** in Thy praise (*tehillah* [8416]).’

Ps. 89:9 ‘Thou dost rule the swelling of the sea; when its waves rise, Thou dost **still** them.’

Ps. 65:7 ‘Who dost **still** the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves and the tumult of the peoples.’

Ps. 106:47 ‘Save us, O Lord, and gather us from among the nations to give thanks to Thy holy name, and to **triumph** in Thy praise.’

שָׁבַח – *shevach* [7624]
To adulate, adore.

Da. 2:23 ‘To Thee, O God of my fathers I give thanks and **praise** for Thou hast given me wisdom and power.’

Da. 4:37 ‘Now I Nebuchadnezzar **praise**, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.’

αἶνος – *ah’ee-nos* [136]
A story, but in the sense of [1868] praise of God

Lu. 18:43 ‘And immediately he regained his sight, and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave **praise** to God.’

Notes

αἰνέω – *ahee-neh-o* [134]
From [136] to praise God.

Lu. 19:37 ‘And as He was now approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to **praise** God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles they had seen.’

δόξα – *doxa* [1391]
From base of [1380]; glory

Joh. 9:24 ‘Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, “give God the **praise** [glory]: we know that this man is a sinner.”’ (AV)

Other renderings

Jude 8 ‘Yet in the same manner these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority and revile angelic **dignities** [majesties].’

Titus 2:13 ‘Looking for that blessed hope, and the **glorious** appearing of the great God and our saviour Jesus Christ.’ (AV)

Rev. 19:7 ‘Let us rejoice and be glad and give the **honour** [glory] to Him, for the marriage of the lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.’

Lu. 14:10 ‘ “Friend move up higher”; then you will have **worship** [honour] in the sight of all who are at the table with you.’

ἔπαινος – *ep’ahee-nos* [1868]
Laudation, a commendable thing

Ro. 13:3 ‘For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behaviour, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have **praise** from the same.’

ἐπαινέω – *ep-ahee-neh'-o* [1867]
To applaud

I Co. 11:2 ‘Now I **praise** you because you remember me in everything, and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.’

Other renderings

Lu. 16:8 ‘And his master **commended** [praised] the unrighteous steward because he had acted shrewdly...’

Ro. 15:11 ‘And again, “**laud** [praise] the Lord all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise Him.”’

ὕμνέω – *humneo* [5214]
To hymn, sing a religious ode; to celebrate (God) in song.

Heb. 2:12 ‘Saying, “I will proclaim Thy name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing Thy **praise**.”’

This verse is quoting from Psalm 22:22. The word rendered praise there is [1984] *halal* (see above).

εὐλογέω – *eulogeo* [2127]
To speak well of (religiously); to bless (thank or invoke a benediction upon, prosper).

Lu. 1:64 ‘And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he began to speak in **praise** of God.’

Other renderings

Lu. 2:28 ‘then he took Him into his arms and **blessed** God...’

Notes

ἀρετή – *aretay* [703]
 Manliness (valour), i.e. excellence (intrinsic or attributed).

I Pe. 2:9 ‘But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for god’s own possession, that you may proclaim the **praises** [excellencies] of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.’

Worship

Now that we have looked at the words rendered ‘praise’, we will treat in the same way the words translated as ‘worship’.

שָׁחָה – *shachah* [7812]
 To depress, i.e. to prostrate in homage to royalty or God.

Ge. 22:5 ‘And Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will **worship** and return to you.” ’

Ex. 34:14 ‘for you shall not **worship** any other god, for the Lord whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.’

Isa. 15:31 ‘So Samuel went back following Saul, and Saul **worshipped** before the Lord.’

Other renderings

Ge. 27:29 ‘May peoples serve you, and nations **bow down** to you.’

I Sa. 2:36 ‘And it shall come about that everyone who is left in your house shall come and **crouch** [bow down] to him for a piece of silver...’

Ps. 72:11 ‘And let all kings **fall** [bow] **down** before him, all nations serve him.’

- 2 Sa. 16:4 'And Ziba said, "I **humbly beseech** [prostrate myself]; let me find favour in your sight, O my lord, the king."'
- 2 Ch. 24:17 'Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah and **made obeisance** to the king.' (AV)
- Es. 3:2 'And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and **reverenced** [paid homage to] Haman.'
- Pr. 12:25 'Heaviness in the heart if man maketh it **stoop**: but a good word maketh it glad.' (AV)

Notes

עָצַב – *atsav* [6087]

To carve, i.e. fabricate or fashion hence (in a bad sense) to worry, pain or anger.

- Jer. 44:19 'And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to **worship** [sacrificial cakes] her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men?'

Other renderings

- 1 Ki. 1:6 'And his father had never **displeased** [crossed] him...'
- 1 Ch. 4:10 '...that Thou wouldst keep me from harm, that it may not **grieve** [pain] me...'
- Ec. 10:9 'he who quarries stones may be **hurt** by them, and he who splits logs may be endangered by them.'
- Ne. 8:10 '...Do not **be sorry** [grieved], for the joy of the Lord is your strength.'

Notes

שָׁגַד – *segiyd* [5457]

Worship, corresponding to שָׁגַד *sagad* [5456], to prostrate oneself (in homage).

Da. 3:5 ‘that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and **worship** the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.’

προσκυνέω – *proskuneo* [4352]

(& προσκυνητής *proskunetes* [4353] : worshippers, see Joh. 4:23): To kiss, like a dog licking his master’s hand; to fawn or crouch; to prostrate oneself in homage, do reverence to, adore.

Mt. 2:2 ‘Where is He who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east, and have come to **worship** Him.’

Mt. 4:10 ‘then Jesus said to him, “begone Satan! For it is written, ‘you shall **worship** the Lord your God and serve Him only.’ ” ’

Joh. 4:24 ‘God is spirit, and those who **worship** Him must **worship** in spirit and in truth.’

σέβομαι – *seb'-om-ahee* [4576]

To revere, i.e. adore.

Mt. 15:9 ‘But in vain do they **worship** me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’

Other renderings

Ac. 13:50 ‘But the Jews aroused the **devout** women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.’

Ac. 13:43 'Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the **religious** [God fearing] proselytes followed. Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue on the grace of God.'

Notes

σεβάζομαι – *seb-ad'zom-ahee* [4573]
To revere.

Ro. 1:25 'For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and **worshipped** and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.'

Other renderings

See σέβασμα *sebasma* [4574] below.

σέβασμα *sebasma* [4574]
Something adored, i.e. an object of worship.

2 Th. 2:4 'Who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or **object of worship**, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.'

Other renderings

Ac. 17:23 see 'objects of worship' in scripture for εὐσεβέω *eu-sebeo* [2151] below.

λατρεύω – *lat-ryoo-o* [3000]
To minister to God, i.e. render religious homage.

Ac. 7:42 'But God turned away and delivered them up to **worship** the host of heaven.'

Notes

Other renderings

2 Ti. 1:3 ‘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.’

εὐσεβέω – *eusebeo* [2151]

To be pious towards God; to worship, or (towards parents) respect (support).

Ac. 17:23 ‘For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD’. What therefore you **worship** in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.’

Other renderings

I Ti. 5:4 ‘but if any widow has children or grand children, let them first learn to practice **piety** in regard to their own family, and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God.’

ἑθελοθησκεία – *ethelothracekiah* [1479]

Voluntary (arbitrary and unwarranted) piety, i.e. sanctimony.

Col. 2:23 ‘which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in, **will worship**, and humility, and neglecting of the body: not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.’ (AV)

θεραπεύω – *therapeuo* [2323]

To wait upon menially, i.e. to adore God; to relieve (of disease):– cure, heal, worship

Ac. 17:25 ‘Neither is He **worshipped** [served] by human hands, as though he needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things.’

Other renderings

Notes

Lu. 9:1 ‘And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons, and to **heal** diseases.’

What does this teach us about healing?

θεοσεβής – *theosebace* [2318]
Reverent of God, i.e. pious.

Joh. 9:31 ‘Now we know that god heareth not sinners: but if any man be a **worshipper** of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.’ (AV)

νεωκόρος – *neokoros* [3511]
A temple servant; worshipper.

Ac. 19:35 ‘And when the town clerk had appeased the people, he said, ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a **worshipper** of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?’ (AV)

θηρησκεία – *thraceki'ah* [2356]
Ceremonial observance.

Col. 2:18 ‘Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self abasement and the **worship** of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind.’

Other renderings

Jas. 1:27 ‘This is pure and undefiled **religion** in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.’