

Prostration

Biblical Principles for Bowing Down (Prostration)

I. Worship of Angels:

Rev. 7:11

"All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God."

Rev. 11:16

"And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God."

1) The Book of Revelation tells us about the type of worship that goes in heavens, i.e. worship of angels.

2) And we always read that it is just: Praises and Prostrations.

3) From Heb 1: 14 " Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" we read about 2 types of Angelic services:

- a. Litrofia (In Greek) → for God
- b. Diakonia (in Greek) → for people

- The first word (according to Greek) is the type of service they offer to God in worshipping Him. And it means (according to lexicons) that they are not changeable words; always the same words repeated. God is not interested in words but in hearts! (1 Sam 16:7).
- While the second word (diakonia), according to Greek, is the type of service offered to people when they are sent by God to convey a message to them. Here we find that the words are changeable according to many factors: the people, the type of the message, the time of the message, the circumstances etc...

4) Therefore, the Early Church, being oriented about these differences loved so much to imitate angels in their worship (Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven → Lord's Prayer).

5) Thus, they used to use the book of psalms as a source of worshipping God with praises. And with Psalms they prostrated giving glory to God as the Angels do!

6) This is also the idea behind the liturgies used in old traditional churches where we find that the words are not changed from week to week, and they convey their faith in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

II. The Hebrew word of "Worship"

1) Worship was delivered to people of God in the Old Testament through God Himself speaking to Moses. Before Moses, the Patriarchs learned to worship God according to what was handed on to them since the time of Abraham (who had his encounters with God).

2) It is therefore meaningful to know that the Hebrew word used in the Old Testament to denote "worship" simply means bowing down with the forehead touching the ground. This is what the Patriarchs, Moses and Israel learned how to worship God. (ex): in the Arabic Bible, we do not find any word for worship except: Bowing down to the ground (we know that Arabic and Hebrew are related languages being both Eastern languages).

III. Proclaiming Lordship of Jesus (with its consequences)

1) In the Eastern tradition, a person bows to another person who is higher and lord over him. So, worshipers used to do that act of prostration bearing in mind that they proclaim their submission to Jesus as their Lord. It is an act of worship to reveal Lordship of Jesus over their lives.

2) This is also meant to expose any other hidden evil Lordship → Is 26:13 "O Lord our God, masters besides You have had dominion over us; But by You only we make mention of Your name."

3) In spiritual practice, it was found that many were delivered from hidden evil bondages through the simple act of prostration with praying Psalms. They act together to break any hidden evil authority → 1Samuel 16: 23 "And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hands. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him."

IV. Our body and its role in worship:

Rom 12: 1

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

1) Our body, (element of our being → because we are body, soul and spirit), has to share in worship (Rom 12: 1).

2) Through prostrations, the body is actively involved in the act of worship. This will help in the restoration of unity between the different element of our being (body, soul and spirit) after they have been disconnected by the Fall.

V. Expression of Gratitude for God

Bowing down repeatedly during worship is an expression of gratitude for God who saved us from sin and its dominion - also from Satan and its authority.

→ 1 John 3: 18 "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but indeed and in truth". ESV

VI. Humbling ourselves in front of God

1) It is an act of humility. We need to remind ourselves that we are just dust (taken from dust) knowing that the original sin entered through pride. Pride is the venom of the serpent that was injected into our nature and we need to keep ourselves humbled to get rid of that venom.

2) Abraham who was described as the friend of God (James 2: 23) said in his dialogue with God "Indeed now I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord." (Gen18: 27) Also Job 42: 6 "therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes".

3) Paul always called himself "slave" of Jesus Christ → Rom 1:1 "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ."

But more than that, writing to the Corinthians, he considered himself also a "Servant" for them! → 2Cor 4: 5 "For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake."

VII. Mysterious partake in the power of the death and resurrection of Christ

1) We need to connect ourselves actively with the power of death and resurrection of Christ. His death puts our old nature to death and His resurrection releases the new nature to grow more.

2) One of the channels that enables us to connect with the divine resource is the act of "bowing down."

3) Every time we go down, we proclaim that we are sinners (dead) - but we then go up soon! Proclaiming that He has risen us up with Him from death

a. Rom 6: 4-6

"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him that the body of sin might be done away with that we should no longer be slaves of sin."

b. Eph 2: 5, 6

"even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Notes:

1. To sum up

Prostration can be:

- a) Act of worship
- b) Act of repentance [Metanoia, in Greek]
- c) Act of contrition (sometimes in some prayer requests)

2. Some may think that prostration during prayer may be linked with Islamic habits - but Islam was known only by the 6th century while prostration in Christian worship was known and documented since the 2nd century, and by the 4th century, this practice was well-known east and west.