

Question: What does it mean to prostrate, and are Christians commanded to prostrate before God?

Prostration is the act of bowing down, often by kneeling or lowering one's head toward the ground, as a sign of deep reverence, worship, or honor. In some cases it can involve falling all the way down so that the face or forehead touches the ground (see 2 Chronicles 7:3).

The Bible shows several examples of people prostrating before God, before other humans, before angels, and even before false gods.

1. People Prostrating Before God

The Bible often describes people humbling themselves before God in worship. One clear example is Abraham's servant. When he met Rebekah and recognized that she was God's chosen wife for Isaac, he bowed down in worship:

Genesis 24:26-27 (ESV)

*Then the man bowed his head and worshiped the LORD and said,
“Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master.”*

Other examples of people bowing before God include Moses when he saw the glory of the Lord (Exodus 34:8-9), the people of Israel when the glory of the Lord came upon the temple (2 Chronicles 7:3), and Ezra and the Levites (Nehemiah 8:6).

2. People Prostrating Before Angels

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John fell at the feet of an angel to worship him, but the angel stopped him:

Revelation 22:8-9 (NIV)

I, John, fell at his feet to worship him. But he said, “Don’t do that! I am your fellow servant... Worship God!”

In another example, Joshua bowed before a heavenly messenger (Joshua 5:14).

3. People Prostrating Before Other Humans

The Bible also records moments when people bowed before other humans. For example, Joseph's brothers bowed before him when they came to Egypt:

Genesis 43:27-28 (NIV)

*Then he asked how they were. And they said, "Your servant our father is well; he is still alive."
Then they bowed down with their faces to the ground.*

Other examples include Joab (2 Samuel 14:22), Araunah (2 Samuel 24:20), and even Haman, whom people bowed to in honor (Esther 3:2).

4. People Prostrating Before False Gods

Sadly, the Bible shows that people have bowed before false gods and demonic powers. When the Israelites joined in the worship of Moab's gods, they bowed down to them:

Numbers 25:2-3 (NIV)

*Israel joined them in worshiping their gods, so the people ate and bowed down before those gods.
Israel yoked themselves to Baal of Peor, and the LORD became angry with Israel.*

King Jeroboam also led people into idol worship (1 Kings 16:31).

So, Should Christians Prostrate?

The answer is yes — but only God is worthy of worship. Humans, angels, and created beings are not to be worshiped.

Jesus clearly taught this during His temptation:

Matthew 4:8-10 (NIV)

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

“All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

Jesus said to him,

“Away from me, Satan! For it is written:

‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’”

So Scripture affirms that the only one who deserves true worship and prostration is God alone.

What About Bowing During Prayer?

Bowing or prostrating can be a meaningful outward expression of humility before God, especially in prayers of repentance, mercy, or earnest supplication. It can symbolize surrender and reverence. But it is not a required rule for prayer. Prayer does not have to include prostration to be accepted by God. Prostration is a personal act of devotion, inspired by the Holy Spirit and a

humble heart.

May the Lord Help Us

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