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# PROSKYNESIS IN THE SYNOPTICS: A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF ΠΡΟΣΚΥΝΕΩ AND JESUS

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## Introduction

The way Jesus was worshiped in the Gospels is an essential question in examining how the New Testament authors perceived Jesus and his supposed pre-Easter messianic identification. It is of little doubt that Jesus began to be worshiped within decades of his death, but the greater question is whether he was worshiped *before* his death, and how that influenced the perception of who Jesus was. In this paper I aim to analyze the usage of the Greek verb προσκυνέω, translated simply as “worship”, and how the authors of the Gospels used it to identify Jesus as more than mortal. I will first seek to establish the historical context of προσκυνέω and the act of *proskynesis*, and then analyze the way each gospel author uses it to identify Jesus. It will be shown that each author uses προσκυνέω in different ways to establish Jesus’s identity—as king, as the son of God, and as God himself. While gospel authors are likely retrojecting post-Easter Christology to the entirety of Jesus’s ministry, it is useful to examine pre-Easter events and view them as the author eventually interpreted them. Not only will this allow us to understand how the gospel authors interpreted the worship of Jesus, but it will also let us understand how the authors believed these events *should* have been interpreted, possibly in their original context.

## προσκυνέω in Context

First-century Palestine was created by several cultures that were assimilated, either by force or adoption, thus influencing Judaism and early Christianity at the time. Each culture’s perception of *proskynesis* directly influences the way Judaism and the early Jesus movement interpreted the term.

Much of the scholarship on the topic of New Testament *proskynesis* has somewhat ignored the term in its greater cultural context.<sup>1</sup> It is essential to evaluate προσκυνέω in three separate contexts in order to give an appropriate analysis of each gospel's use of the term: Hellenistic, Roman, and Jewish.

### *Etymology and Meaning*

Προσκυνέω is a compound verb formed by the prefix προς- and the ε-contract verb κυνέω. Κυνέω, which generally carries the meaning of “to kiss,” has etymologically also meant “to prostrate (oneself at), to kiss the ground, to honor by prostrating . . . also to throw kiss-hands.”<sup>2</sup> Beekes further indicates that the compound προσκυνέω carries a religious or venerative quality as well.<sup>3</sup> Marti further concludes that the “original meaning would *a priori* seem to have been ‘to worship’ or ‘to greet with a kiss.’”<sup>4</sup> The prefix προς-, then, would not only indicate the direction of the kiss, or to whom the prostration was directed, but it also seems to amplify the act of κυνέω with reverence and veneration. This effectively makes the one to whom *proskynesis* was given higher status than a mortal man, as only gods and kings were considered such.

One of the most important and enlightening contemporary sources at this time was Philo. Of the thirty-seven times Philo uses the verb προσκυνέω, he describes the act of *proskynesis* eleven times, all of which involved falling down, prostration, and a salutation.<sup>5</sup> It is also important to note that these usages of προσκυνέω are independent of any usage of προσπίπτω, which is often used to describe a falling down independent of προσκυνέω.

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1. Specifically Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008); James D. G. Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?: The New Testament Evidence* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), and Larry W. Hurtado, *How on Earth did Jesus Become a God?: Historical Questions about Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005). Not one of these studies attempts to look at προσκυνέω in its greater historical context outside of the first century-Christian and Jewish world, missing much of how we should interpret the term as the New Testament authors use it. They simply give a brief analysis of the term, which is insufficient for understanding the full impact of προσκυνέω and the implications it has on the overall gospel narrative of Jesus.

2. Robert Beekes and Lucien van Beek, “κυνέω,” *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 1:803.

3. Beekes and van Beek, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, 1:803.

4. Berthe M. Marti, “Proskynesis and Adorare,” *Linguistic Society of America* 12:4 (1936): 273.

5. Philo, *Somn* 1.111, 133, 140; *Ios.* 6, 9, 164; *Mos.* 2.165; *Spec.* 1.15; *Spec.* 2.17; *Prov.* 2.19.

## Greece

There are several key texts that are able to tell us not only what *proskynesis* entailed, but also how each author and his contemporaries interpreted it. It is important to note that the historicity of the accounts does not matter so much as *how* the author and his contemporaries interpreted and perceived what the term προσκυνέω meant. In his histories, Herodotus tells us how *proskynesis* was performed. In speaking of differences in rank he explains: “if the difference in rank be but little, it is the cheek that is kissed; if it be great, the humbler bows down and does obeisance to the other.”<sup>6</sup> Although Herodotus is describing *proskynesis* within the context of Persian culture, it is safe to conclude that this description fits the Greek performance of *proskynesis* as well, albeit in a purely religious context. In another volume, Herodotus tells us of a group of Spartans who refused to perform the aforementioned obeisance to a Persian king:

When the guards commanded and would have compelled them to fall down and do obeisance to the king, they said they would never do that, no not if they were thrust down headlong; for it was not their custom (said they) to do obeisance to mortal men, nor was that the purpose of their coming.<sup>7</sup>

Here Herodotus establishes the most important aspect of the Grecian perception and interpretation of *proskynesis*: it was only befitting to perform toward the gods—beings who were not considered mortal. It is also important to note that Herodotus is careful to distinguish between προσπίπτω (to fall down) and προσκυνέω (to perform obeisance). In his study of *proskynesis*, Marti concludes that there mainly two different gestures of *proskynesis*: 1. a hand-kissing gesture and 2. a kneeling gesture<sup>8</sup>—Herodotus’s description and careful explanation of the act of *proskynesis* seems to imply that reverence and worship are an inherent part of the act, not just a falling down that προσπίπτω would imply.

In Arrian’s account of Alexander’s attempt to introduce *proskynesis* in his court, he tells us of Callisthenes’s disapproval and refusal to perform obeisance to Alexander. Arrian declares, “the most important distinction concerns the matter of obeisance. At greeting men receive a kiss, but what is divine...we

6. Herodotus, Book I, 134. Note the usage of προσκυνέω: ...ἦν δὲ πολλῶ ἢ οὐτερος ἀγεννέστερος, προσπίπτων προσκυνέει τόν ἕτερον.

7. Herodotus, Book VII, 136: “...πρώτα μὲν τῶν δορθόρων κελσύνοντων καὶ ἀνάγκη σφι προσφερόντων προσκυνέειν βασιλεῖα προσπίπτοντας, οὐκ ἔφασαν ὠθεόμενοι ὑπ’ αὐτῶν ἐπὶ κεφαλὴν ποιήσιν ταῦτα οὐδαμὰ. οὔτε γάρ σφίσι ἐν νόμῳ εἶναι ἄνθρωπον προσκυνέειν οὔτε κατὰ ταῦτα ἤκειν.”

8. Marti, “Proskynesis and Adorare,” 272.

are forbidden even to touch it, is for that very reason honored by obeisance.”<sup>9</sup> This informs us of two ways in which Arrian also perceived the implication of the *proskynesis*: first, in the Greek mind, it is only appropriate to perform before the divine. Second, it substantiates the differences between the Persian and Greek *proskynesis*, but confirms that the *proskynesis* and obeisance were reserved for two groups of people: kings and gods. However, it is clear by Arrian’s interpretation of the account, Alexander was trying to put himself at least on par with the gods—a term E. Badian calls ἰσόθεος, or equal to god.<sup>10</sup> Whatever Alexander’s true claims were, this *proskynesis* was either meant to worship him as a god in the Greek mind or to venerate him as the Great King to the Persians.

In his *Anabasis*, Xenophon echoes this same sentiment, “for to no human creature do you pay homage as master, but to the gods alone.”<sup>11</sup> Here Xenophon confirms that in the Greek mind, *proskynesis* is only fit for the gods. He further extends the context of the *proskynesis*: the only persons that can be perceived as masters are the ones worthy of homage and obeisance—the gods alone.

Additionally, Polybius gives us an account of Philip’s cultic activity, that he went “to sacrifice and thus to sue for the favor of the god, worshipping and adoring most devoutly his tables and altars.”<sup>12</sup> This gives further insight into the fact that aside from sacrifices, *proskynesis* was also an essential part of cultic worship. As the Greek Ruler cult was established, its function was also to sue for favors through sacrifices and worship of rulers who were, at least politically, perceived as gods.

From this brief survey of the Greek sources, we can reasonably conclude, like Lily Taylor, that *proskynesis*, in the Greek mind, carried with it the idea and act of worship of gods.<sup>13</sup> This interpretive framework of *proskynesis* directly affects the greater Hellenistic attitudes and usages of the verb προσκυνέω in Hellenistic culture in the first centuries BCE and CE, even in Second Temple Judaism and the roots of Christianity. Additionally, the Persian

9. Arrian, IV.11

10. E. Badian, “Alexander the Great between two thrones and Heaven,” in *Subject and Ruler: The Cult of the Ruler Power in Classical Antiquity* (ed. Alastair Small; vol. 17 of *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series*, ed. P. Foss and J. H. Humphrey; Ann Arbor: Thomson-Shore, 1996), 22.

11. Xenophon, *Anabasis*, III.2.13

12. Polybius XXXII 15.4–7 “...τό γάρ ἅμα μέν θύειν καί διά τούτων ἐξιλάσκεσθαι τό θεῖον, προσκυνούντα καί λιπαροῦντα τάς τραπέζας καί τοὺς βψμοὺς ἐξάλλως...”

13. Lily Ross Taylor, “The ‘Proskynesis’ and the Hellenistic Ruler Cult,” *JHS* 47:1 (1927): 53, 57.

idea of *proskynesis* before kings also directly affected Jesus's veneration and perception as the Son of David and Messiah.

### Rome

Roman sources, then, are also extremely important to evaluate the context of προσκυνέω and cultic worship in the ancient Near East during the first-century CE

An important example is the *proskynesis* in relation to the Emperor Caligula. While the Roman Imperial Cult had already been established, at the outset of his reign, Caligula supposedly “forbade Romans from giving him even a formal greeting,”<sup>14</sup> let alone veneration through *proskynesis*. However, later on in Caligula's reign, *proskynesis* seems to have become a regular occurrence in relation to his own self-realized divinity and worship through the Imperial Cult,<sup>15</sup> especially in the account of Lucius Vitellius. Suetonius<sup>16</sup> gives the account of Lucius, who after his successful peace with Parthia and under general paranoia of Caligula, came to the emperor and prostrated himself before Caligula. Suetonius tells us that Lucius worshiped Caligula as a god and “he did not presume to approach the emperor except with veiled head, turning himself about and then prostrating himself.”<sup>17</sup> Dio Cassius also recounts that during this event, Lucius Vitellius “arrayed himself in a manner beneath his rank, then fell at the emperor's feet with tears and lamentations, all the while calling him many divine names and paying him worship; and at last he vowed that if he were allowed to live he would offer sacrifice to him.”<sup>18</sup> Dio was clearly using it only in reference to Caligula being seen as a god.

A more contemporary source of Caligula's self-realized divinity is found in Philo's *Embassy to Gaius*. Philo was part of an embassy sent from Alexandria to Rome to petition Caligula to secure the rights of Alexandrian Jews, who were suffering in civil strife with the Greeks.<sup>19</sup> While on this embassy, Caligula ap-

14. Anthony Barrett, *Caligula: The Corruption of Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 150.

15. According to Gradel, the supposed divinity of the emperor was relative as opposed to absolute. However, included in any divine honors was sacrifice to the emperor. See Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 25–26, 91–97. Additionally, within the religious ritual of the imperial cult the proskynetic hand-kissing gesture was used, see Marti, “Proskynesis and Adorare,” 279.

16. Though Suetonius is a later Roman historian (70–130 CE), his interpretation is still relevant to this discussion because it provides us with a second-century source that shows that the older interpretation and cultural implications of *proskynesis* were maintained.

17. Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, 7.3.2.5.

18. Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 59.27.4–6: “...καὶ θειάσας αὐτόν πολλά καὶ προσκυνήσας...”

19. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.257–260; Philo, *On the Embassy to Gaius*, XXVII–XXXI.71–224.

parently ordered a “colossal statute of himself to be erected in the holy of holies, having his own name inscribed upon it with the title of Jupiter!”<sup>20</sup> The holy of holies was the spot where the God of the Jews resided—Caligula was attempting to effectively make himself the God of the Jews, and thus the subject of their obeisance and worship, of which *proskynesis* was included. Additionally, Philo, while appealing to Gaius, explains to him that Gaius’s great-grandfather Augustus himself “marvel[ed] at and honour[ed] (προσεκύνει)” the temple.<sup>21</sup> Through Philo’s account, we clearly see that Romans would have also interpreted the term προσκυνέω as an act of worship and obeisance. Taylor is completely correct when she states, “Philo does not critique the imperial cult, but rather the emperor Gaius because of his active—and insane—imposition of his divine veneration against the will of the people.”<sup>22</sup>

The most convincing evidence of the Roman contextualization of προσκυνέω is found under both Herod the Great and Pontius Pilate’s rule over Judaea. Taylor asserts, “Herod the Great instituted the imperial cult in Judaea.”<sup>23</sup> This is clearly seen in the structures Herod built in Sebaste, Caesarea, and Pnias devoted to the worship of Augustus: in Sebaste, the Augusteum,<sup>24</sup> in Caesarea the temple of Augustus,<sup>25</sup> and in Pnias another temple to Augustus.<sup>26</sup> After Herod, Pilate continued to establish and promote the Roman Imperial Cult. Apparently, “Pilate’s position carried within it a religious dimension . . . and the ‘role of governor included supervision of religious matters along essentially *Roman* guidelines.’”<sup>27</sup> It was therefore part of Pilate’s job as governor to encourage the honors due to the emperor.<sup>28</sup>

Ultimately, the perception of προσκυνέω remained the same in the Roman era as it was in the Greek. Proskynesis was only used in relation to royalty or to divine beings—whether it was a god or an emperor turned god. The

20. Philo, *Gaius*, XXIX.188.

21. Philo, *Gaius*, XXXVIII.310: “...τό ιερὸν καὶ ὅτι οὐδὲν ἐστὶν ἀφίδρθμα ἐν αὐτῷ χειρόχμητον, ὁρατὸν ἀοράτου μίμημα φύσεως, ἐθαύμαζε καὶ προσεκύνει...”

22. Joan E. Taylor, “Pontius Pilate and the Imperial Cult in Roman Judaea,” *NTS* 52 (2006): 576.

23. Taylor, “Pontius Pilate,” 562.

24. Ehud Netzer, *The Architecture of Herod the Great Builder* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 85–92; see also Philo, *Gaius*, 305.

25. Netzer, *Herod the Great*, 103–106; see also Josephus, *Wars* 1.414.

26. Netzer, *Herod the Great*, 218–222; see also Josephus, *Wars* 1.404–406; *Ant.* 15.363–364.

27. Taylor, “Pontius Pilate,” 556. Taylor’s quote in this section is found in Mary Beart, John North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998), 1:321.

28. Taylor, “Pontius Pilate,” 570.

near-contemporary evidence suggests that the Jesus movement would have also operated within this religious context.

### *Judaism*

Judaism also seems to employ this same pattern of interpretation in regard to προσκυνέω. As contemporary and near-contemporary Jews with Jesus, Philo and Josephus provide us with the best insight of how προσκυνέω was used and to whom it was intended; the Septuagint (LXX) also provides us with great insight into προσκυνέω as well. These three sources provide the best context in which to evaluate προσκυνέω in the Jewish world in a Greco-Roman context.

In his works, Philo uses προσκυνέω thirty-seven times.<sup>29</sup> Of his thirty-seven uses, twenty are used in relation to divinity, fourteen to kings/royalty, and three miscellaneous uses. Josephus uses προσκυνέω ninety-eight times.<sup>30</sup> Of these ninety-eight uses, sixty are in relation to divinity, thirty-four to royalty, and four miscellaneous uses. Between Philo and Josephus, προσκυνέω is used 135 times, and of these 55 percent are used in relation to divinity, 40 percent to royalty, and a mere 5 percent of other uses. Προσκυνέω is undoubtedly used almost exclusively to royalty and divinity, and it is within this context that Matthew, Mark, and Luke are using προσκυνέω in their gospels.

Additionally, the LXX, which we will see influenced Matthew and Luke, uses προσκυνέω within these same boundaries—I will highlight six passages. 1 Kings 1:16 tells us that Bathsheba “bowed down and did obeisance (προσεκύνησεν) to the king”; 1 Chr 29:20 indicates, “and all the assembly blessed the Lord, the God of their ancestors, and bowed their heads and prostrated (προσεκύνησαν) themselves before the Lord and the king.” Psalm 28:2<sup>31</sup> shows David’s desire to “ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship (προσκυνήσατε) the Lord in holy splendor,” and Psalm 95:9<sup>32</sup> says, “worship (προσκυνήσατε) the Lord in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.” In the Apocrypha, Judith relates, “when they arrived at Jerusalem, they worshipped (προσεκύνησαν) God,” and Sirach, “Then all the people together quickly fell to the ground on their faces to worship (προσκυνήσαι) their Lord, the Almighty, God Most High.” The LXX definitely carries the same perception

29. See Appendix for Philo’s uses of προσκυνέω between divinity, royalty, and other uses.

30. See Appendix for Josephus’ uses of προσκυνέω between divinity, royal, and other uses.

31. Psalm 29:2 in the NRSV.

32. Psalm 96:9 in the NRSV.



of προσκυνέω as Philo and Josephus, further establishing the Jewish context in which the synoptic writers wrote.

Each of the four outlined contexts establishes the setting for the synoptic authors. *Proskynesis* was used almost uniquely for gods and kings, and the synoptic authors were certainly influenced by these implications of προσκυνέω, and they deliberately used προσκυνέω to show Jesus as both king and god.

### προσκυνέω in the Synoptics

The synoptics use προσκυνέω eighteen times.<sup>33</sup> Mark uses it twice, Luke three times, and Matthew thirteen. Each author's use of προσκυνέω in relation to Jesus is extremely telling of his own perception not only who he believed Jesus was, but also how Jesus ought to be perceived by others.<sup>34</sup> Matthew appears to be extremely deliberate in his use of προσκυνέω, while Mark and Luke seem selective when they use the verb: they instead use verbs such as προσπίπτω and λατρεύω in relation to adoration, but not necessarily worship, of Jesus.<sup>35</sup> προσκυνέω to Mark and Luke seems to be reserved for extreme forms of worship, veneration, and adoration. Again, it is important to understand that these authors are retrojecting their post-resurrection perceptions of Jesus onto his pre-resurrection ministry showing how they believed the original events should be and should have been interpreted.

Mark's only two uses of προσκυνέω appear in the story of the Gerasense Demoniac (Mark 5:1–20) and the mocking of Jesus by Roman soldiers (15:19). Hurtado explains that Mark's selective use of προσκυνέω is due to Mark's use of irony in an attempt to underscore and emphasizes Jesus's true divine status.<sup>36</sup> The only people who perform *proskynesis* in his gospel are considered to be evil: the demoniac and the abusive, crucifying Romans. Hurtado is quite right when he explains it in relation to the demoniac:

It is almost inescapable that readers were intended to see in this dramatic scene a transparent anticipation of their own deliverance from evil, and in the uncanny recognition of Jesus's true status a prefiguring and confirmation of their own confessional claim and their devotional practice.<sup>37</sup>

33. John uses προσκυνέω eleven times (4:20–24; 9:38; 12:20). Due to the narrow scope of this paper, only the synoptics have been considered in the analysis of προσκυνέω; however, John should certainly be considered in a larger analysis of the term in the Gospels and New Testament.

34. I disagree with Bauckham's observation that "in Mark and Luke the gesture of obeisance to Jesus is probably no more than a mark of respect for an honored teacher." Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 131. I believe that each author is using προσκυνέω to represent their views of the divine Jesus and that they are very aware of the religious implications of using a word such as προσκυνέω.

35. Dunn, *First Christians*, 12–22.

36. Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 144.

37. Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 144.

In Mark's portrayal of the Roman soldiers worshiping Jesus, Mark is also showing Jesus's divine messianic status. The irony is that while the soldiers are mocking Jesus as King and god, Mark is underscoring the fact that Jesus *is* King and god.<sup>38</sup> Mark's use of demoniac powers correctly worshiping Jesus is an attempt to convince his audience of Jesus's true status, albeit through ironic means, as Messiah. This would have effectually heightened the reader's response to Mark's claim of Jesus being King and god by illustrating the correct way to worship and give honor to Jesus.

Luke is equally selective in using προσκυνέω, but in a much different way. Luke's three uses of προσκυνέω are all in relation to the worship of God. Luke uses it twice in Jesus's temptation narrative (Luke 4:7–8)<sup>39</sup> and once in relation to the post-resurrected Jesus (25:52). In the temptation narrative, Satan portrays himself as the God of earth, offering Jesus glory and authority if Jesus worships (προσκυνησικ) him. In Jesus's response, Luke directly quotes the LXX from Deuteronomy 6:13. However, Luke deliberately changes φοβηθήση in Deuteronomy to προσκυνήσεις in what seems like an attempt to heighten the reverence due to God, and that only God is worthy of *proskynesis*. Luke then deliberately reserves using ποσκυνέω in relation to Jesus until after the resurrection. The disciples were only allowed by Luke to perform *proskynesis* to Jesus until after his visitation and their return to Jerusalem. This would seem to emphasize Luke's idea that Jesus did not become *fully* divine until *after* his resurrection. As noted earlier, Luke prefers to use a verb like προσπίπτω to show reverence given to Jesus during his ministry. Luke effectively “periodizes reverence given to Jesus, distinguishing between the period of Jesus's ministry and the ‘post-Easter’ period in the language that he uses to portray people's actions.”<sup>40</sup> While Luke desires to portray Jesus as the son of God<sup>41</sup> throughout his narrative, he only sees Jesus as God after the resurrection. Luke, then, seems to highlight the fact that Jesus was only worthy to be worshiped as God until after he became immortal through his resurrection.

38. Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 145.

39. It is important to highlight here that in both Q and the Gospel of Thomas, the only instances of ποσκυνέω are found in their temptation narratives. This is easily explained by the fact that Q and Thomas are only sayings documents, and do not contain the same type of commentary that Matthew, Mark, and Luke give us. See James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffman, and John S. Koppenborg, eds., *The Sayings Gospel Q in Greek and English: with Parallels from the Gospel of Mark and Thomas* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 81; Uwe-Karsten Plisch, *The Gospel of Thomas: Original Text with Commentary* (trans. Genie Schenke Robinson; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2008), 69.

40. Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 143.

41. We see this in his account of Jesus's baptism and genealogy in Luke 3:21–38, and in the last temptation of Jesus in an attempt to highlight Jesus's divine Sonship in Luke 4:9–13.

Matthew gives us the most comprehensive and overwhelming evidence of *proskynesis* given to Jesus. Of Matthew's thirteen uses of *προσκυνέω*, ten are used with Jesus as the object of *proskynesis*, the other three are used exactly the same as Luke (and the Q-sources) in the temptation sequence. Bauckham suggests that Matthew uses *προσκυνέω* "in a semi-technical way for the obeisance that is due to Jesus."<sup>42</sup> Matthew does not use *προσκυνέω* in connection with mockers or demons like Mark, and thus only uses it with people who genuinely seek help and worship Jesus.<sup>43</sup> Matthew uses *προσκυνέω* in connection to both Jesus as God and King. It will be helpful to group these usages together and analyze how Matthew uses *προσκυνέω* in reference to Jesus's role as both.

Matthew's infancy narrative is aimed at portraying Jesus as king to his audience. When the Magi come to Jerusalem, they inform Herod that they seek the king of the Jews, and that the purpose of the Magi's coming is "to worship (*προσκυνήσας*) him" (Matt. 2:2). Herod responds that he too wants to "worship (*προσκυνήσω*) him" (2:8) when the Magi find Jesus. When the Magi finally find Jesus in Bethlehem, they "worshiped (*προσεκύνησαν*) him" (2:11) as king of the Jews. Matthew's deliberate use of *προσκυνέω* is an attempt to establish royal status to Jesus, and to show to his audience that he is their rightful King to whom *proskynesis* should be performed.

The other ten uses in Matthew all relate to Jesus as a divine being, illustrating Matthew's emphasis of Jesus as God. Unlike Luke, Matthew saves Jesus's temptation of power and glory for the last trial—this puts Matthew's emphasis on Jesus as God and on *proskynesis* as something only fit for God, who serves also as the King and Lord of the world, illustrating *προσκυνέω*'s dual nature. Like Luke, Matthew has Jesus directly quote Deuteronomy 6:13 from the LXX, and likewise deliberately replaces *φοβέω* with *προσκυνέω*.

Of the remaining eight uses of *προσκυνέω*, five refer to Jesus in a position of benefactor. Whether the cleansing of a leper (8:2), the raising of a ruler's daughter from the dead (9:18), the Canaanite woman's supplication for help (15:25), the parable of the unforgiving servant (18:26), or James and John's mother asking Jesus for a favor (20:20), Matthew uses all of these as examples of Jesus not just as a benefactor, but as *the* Benefactor—the only one who can perform the variety of mighty deeds necessary to give the people what they need because he is divine and he alone is worthy of supplication through *proskynesis*.

42. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 131.

43. Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 147; Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinze Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 229.

Matthew's remaining two uses of προσκυνέω are explicit references to the disciples worshipping Jesus as the Son of God and the resurrected Lord. Once Jesus enters the boat after walking on water, the disciples acknowledge him as the "Son of God" (14:33), and worship him as the divine Lord. Hurtado asserts, "both the Christian confession that Matthew ascribes to the disciples and his characterization of their reverence with the verb προσκυνέω combine to make the scene in 14:33 'an image of the congregation of the risen Lord.'"<sup>44</sup> In other words, Matthew is deliberately highlighting the disciples' worship of Jesus to show his audience not only who Jesus was, but also what the correct form of Jesus worship is. Matthew, like Luke, also uses προσκυνέω in relation to the disciples' worship of the resurrected Lord (28:9, 17). Matthew's perpetual use of προσκυνέω throughout his gospel is an attempt to show his audience who Matthew believed Jesus was throughout his entire ministry.

Matthew's final use of προσκυνέω perfectly frames his gospel with the temptation narrative as Jesus proclaims, after he is resurrected, "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt 28:18). Bauckham is absolutely correct when he explains that this "shows its appropriateness to Jesus, when the unique divine sovereignty over all things—which had not been the devil's to give—is given to Jesus by his Father, thereby including him in the unique identity to which alone προσκύνησις is due."<sup>45</sup> Matthew, then, is framing his gospel in a way to show Jesus as both God *and* King. Matthew is trying to show his audience that Jesus "is still accessible to the believing congregation"<sup>46</sup> and that reverence through *proskynesis*, implied by Matthew's use of προσκυνέω, allows Jesus to fulfill their petitions—this is what Hurtado calls "the characteristic setting in which the original readers themselves would have revered the risen Jesus as Lord."<sup>47</sup>

## Conclusion

Each synoptic author is deliberately using προσκυνέω and the worship of Jesus to show whom each believed Jesus to be. Mark through his use of irony, Luke through his "periodization" of Jesus worship, and Matthew throughout Jesus's entire ministry. Each author clearly perceives Jesus as a divine being worthy of *proskynesis*, and each believes his respective audience should view

44. Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 148.

45. Richard Bauckham, "The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism* (ed. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis; vol. 63 of *Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 68.

46. Bornkamm, Barth, and Held, *Tradition and Interpretation*, 229.

47. Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 148.

Jesus as such, especially in light of Jesus's post-Easter resurrection. While taking προσκυνέω in its greater historical context within the Greco-Roman and second temple worlds, it is much easier to see how προσκυνέω influences each author's perception of Jesus, how each wrote to his respective audience concerning Jesus's divine status, and how Jesus should be properly worshiped.

## Appendix

*Occurrences of προσκυνέω in Philo*

Object of προσκυνέω	Divinity	Royalty	Other
<i>On the Creation</i>		83	
<i>On the Giants</i>	54		
<i>On the Confusion of Tongues</i>	49		
<i>On Mating with the Preliminary Studies</i>	104		
<i>On Dreams</i>	2.99, 132	2.7, 80, 89, 90, 111(x2), 113, 133, 140	
<i>On Abraham</i>			65
<i>On Joseph</i>		7-9, 164	
<i>On the Life of Moses</i>	1.276; 2.23, 265		2.40
<i>The Decalogue</i>	4, 64, 72, 76		
<i>The Special Laws</i>	1.15, 24; 2.199		4.17
<i>On the Contemplative Life</i>	9(x3)		
<i>On Providence: Fragment II</i>	20		
<i>On the Embassy to Gaius; The First Part of the Treatise on Virtues</i>	310		

*Occurrences of προσκυνέω in Josephus*

Object of προσκυνέω	Divinity	Royalty	Other
<i>Antiquities</i>	3.91; 4.137; 6.2(x2), 55, 154(x2); 7.95; 8.25, 118-119, 225, 227-228, 248, 271, 317(x2), 343; 9.11, 96, 98, 133, 135, 139, 255, 261, 267, 269; 10.29, 69, 213-214, 263; 11.3, 87, 131, 167, 331, 333(x3); 12.114; 13.54, 74; 20.49, 71, 164	2.11, 13; 6.240, 285, 302; 7.2, 114- 115(x3), 187, 211, 250-251, 266, 268, 275, 330, 349, 254, 362, 381; 8.386; 11.209-210(x3), 230, 277; 20.28, 56, 65	1.335; 6.334; 8.331; 10.211
<i>Wars</i>	1.73; 2.341, 414, 444; 4.262, 324; 5.99, 381, 402; 6.123	2.360, 366, 380; 6.331	
<i>Against Apion</i>	1.239, 261		