

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study of *Priceless: Finding Your Value in God* these sermon outlines will use similar Scripture passages to reinforce the same themes as the study regarding the salvation offered through God's Son and the worship He deserves.

Introduction: One country preacher recognized how important worship is and even trained his mule with words of worship. The day came when he had to sell the mule. The preacher told the new owner the mule was trained to go when the rider said "Praise the Lord," and to stop when the rider said, "Amen." The buyer mounted the beast and commanded, "Praise the Lord," and the mule shot off like a rocket. The startled rider panicked. "Whoa!" he screamed. The mule was headed straight for a cliff, "Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!" At the last second he remembered the minister's instructions. "Amen!" he shouted, and the mule screeched to a halt right at the edge of the cliff. As the owner peered over the precipice, he wiped his brow and sighed, "Praise the Lord." ... At least, he entered heaven with praise on his lips.

Praise toward Jesus is the most appropriate message that can be on our lips. I think most of us would accept that. But why? In the first chapter of Colossians, Paul shares multiple reasons why we must worship Jesus. Let's take a look at four of them.

1. Worship Jesus because He is the Revealer of the Father. *"image of the invisible God"* (v. 15)

Most churches have a church directory. The pictures in it rarely accurately reflect the family, especially after a few years have gone by. Even so, this small book enables people to put names and faces together to make it easier to recognize people and develop relationships with them. Without a picture, it can be difficult to get to know people.

When it comes to God, people have a hard time recognizing Him too. He's invisible. It's hard to get to know or worship an invisible God. So people began making stuff that reminded them of some aspect of their understanding of their creator. If they thought of their creator as powerful, they would make an image of a bull. If they thought of him as fast, they cast him in the image of a leopard. But all of these images had their limitations. None of them could measure up to the majesty of who our true God is. That's why the second of the Ten Commandments prohibited idols (Exodus 20:4). They could not show the full glory of God (Is. 42:8). The problem with images or pictures is that they never do justice to the original. They always fall short. I doubt any of us has ever had a picture that we felt was a true representation of who we are.

God had a desire for us to enter into a relationship with Him, to get to know Him just as He is. So when the time was right, He gave us a perfect visible image that we could look at to reveal all of God's character. The Bible talks about that image in

Hebrews 1:3. It says that the Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being. Jesus was that perfect image. He possessed all the characteristics of God to their fullest extent because He was God. He made the invisible God visible. He revealed God to us so that we might have the opportunity to get to know Him and so that we might choose to enter into a relationship with Him. Thomas, one of Jesus' disciples, asked Jesus to show them God the Father. In response, Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John 14:9)

2. Worship Jesus because He is the Ruler over all creation. *"firstborn of every creature"* (v. 15)

This part of the passage has created false teaching when not understood properly. Some people have taken this phrase to mean that Jesus was God's first creation – that God created Jesus before He created anything else. That would make Jesus a created being that had a beginning rather than the self-existent eternal God.

Think about what you know of Hebrew (Jewish) society of which Paul, the writer of Colossians was a part. What did it mean to be the "firstborn"? It usually did refer to the physical fact that the firstborn child was the child who was the first to be born in the family. But it had a whole lot less to do with timing than it had to do with position and importance within the family structure. This was especially true if the physical first born was a girl. She would have never been referred to with the title "firstborn" because of the role that the firstborn was to serve in. Upon the death of his father, the firstborn was to become the leader or ruler of the family, and he would also inherit a double-share of the father's wealth. It was a place of preeminence. By referring to Jesus with the title "firstborn", Paul is saying that Jesus is the ruler of all creation.

As much as any political leader thinks that he rules his country, he does not. He and his country are a part of the creation. That means that Jesus is the ruler there, and there is not a thing that anyone can do to change that fact. Let's get a little more personal. Are you a part of God's creation? YES! Then who has the right to make the decisions that affect you and your family? You...or Jesus?

Worship Jesus because He is the ruler over all creation including you and me.

3. Worship Jesus because He is the Conqueror of death. *"firstborn from the dead"* (vs. 18)

A man is driving along a highway and sees a rabbit jump out across the middle of the road. He swerves to avoid hitting it, but unfortunately the rabbit jumps right in front of the car. The driver, a sensitive man as well as an animal lover, pulls over and gets out to see what has become of the rabbit. Much to his dismay, the rabbit is dead. The driver feels so awful that he begins to cry. A woman driving down the highway sees a man crying on the side of a road and pulls over. She steps out of the car and asks the man what's wrong. "I feel terrible," he explains, "I accidentally hit this rabbit and killed it." The woman says, "Don't worry." She runs to her car and pulls out a spray can. She walks over to the limp dead rabbit, bends down, and sprays the contents onto the rabbit. The rabbit jumps up, waves its paw at the two of them and hops off down the road. Ten feet away the rabbit stops, turns around and waves again. He hops down the road another 10 feet, turns and waves, hops another ten feet, turns and waves, and repeats this again and again and again, until he hops out of sight. The man is astonished. He runs over to the woman and asks, "What is in that

can?" The woman turns the can around so that the man can read the label. It says.... "Hair Spray - Restores life to dead hair, adds permanent wave."

What does it take for something to rise from the dead? It takes the power of God. Jesus rose from the dead, and He is described here as "the firstborn from the dead". So we've got to deal with that term "firstborn" again. Scripture tells us of many people who were raised from the dead. So how is Jesus the firstborn? All of the people who were raised from the dead before Jesus had one thing in common – they all died again. They gave death some repeat business. They got their card stamped twice. Jesus' resurrection was different. Jesus rose to never die again because in His resurrection, He defeated death. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor 15:55-57) In every resurrection before Jesus, those who were resurrected only won the battle with death. The eventual winner of the war was always death. But Jesus gained the final victory so He is the firstborn from among the dead. Worship Jesus because He has conquered death!

4. Worship Jesus because He is the Restorer of my relationship with God. *"made peace through the blood of His cross" (vs. 20)*

Jesus' introduction to the only recorded sermon that He ever delivered includes these words: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" (Matt. 5:9). The reason that Jesus could say this is because His whole mission was to do what it took to bring peace between God and man. He accomplished this through His cross.

The fact that Jesus can reconcile man and God proves that He is God because in order for that reconciliation to happen, there had to be forgiveness of sin. The Pharisees rightly claimed that only God can forgive sin (Matt. 9:6), yet Jesus claimed that ability for Himself. When some men brought a lame man to Jesus, Jesus first claimed to forgive His sins (Mark 2:9). When questioning arose over His right to do this, He then turned and healed the man thereby proving His ability to heal and to forgive sin. In Col. 2:13-14, it says that Jesus raised us from the dead spiritually by forgiving all our sins and blotting them out as if they never existed. This He accomplished through the payment He made in dying for us.

A story is told that Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, once had captured a prince and his family. When they came before him, the monarch asked the prisoner, "What will you give me if I release you?" "The half of my wealth," was his reply. "And if I release your children?" "Everything I possess." "And if I release your wife?" "Your Majesty, I will give myself." Cyrus was so moved by his devotion that he freed them all. As they returned home, the prince said to his wife, "Wasn't Cyrus a handsome man!" With a look of deep love for her husband, she said to him, "I didn't notice. I could only keep my eyes on you - the one who was willing to give himself for me."

Conclusion: The Bible uses many descriptive words for Jesus. Each one gives a different reason to worship Him. Many of them are recorded in a song with which I've become recently re-acquainted. The words go like this: "Master, Redeemer, Savior of the world, Wonderful, Counselor, Bright Morning Star, the Lily of the Valley, Provider and Friend, He was yesterday, He'll be tomorrow, the Beginning and the End. Jehovah, Messiah, the Mighty God and King, He's the Bread of Life, He's the lasting Word of love

that I sing. Light in darkness, the Door to heaven, He's my home in the sky. He's the fountain of Living Waters that shall never run dry. But the angels called Him Jesus, born of a virgin, and Mary called Him Jesus. Oh, but I call Him Lord."

Chris Talton is a graduate of Liberty University and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has served in three churches for a total of 13 years. Currently he teaches Bible at Colonial Hills Christian School just outside Atlanta, Ga. He and his wife of 26 years, Tammy, have two grown children and one grandson.