



Worshiping The Preeminent **Christ** In Colossians

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“Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.” -Isaiah 52:13

Text: Colossians 1:15-18

Main Idea: We are obligated to worship Christ distinctly because He is supremely above everything in creation. His own nature demands a unique worship fitting of the unique and preeminent Christ. Since Christ is like no one else, He deserves worship like no one else.

Worship is the way we express reverence and praise to those who are worthy or earn that merit. At graduations we salute the Valedictorian and at athletic events we praise the victor. We don't call it worship (because we save that for religious dedication), but what we are doing is attributing some kind of reverence to persons who accomplish praiseworthy feats. In other words, we praise those who demonstrate they are worthy of such praise by what they achieve. This sort of evaluation of merit is effective

for most people, but if we apply this to Christ, we not only cheapen the worship he deserves, but we shortchange ourselves as well.

What makes worship to Christ so unique is not just that he has accomplished what no one else has, but that in his very nature he is uniquely worthy of worship. In other words, while Christ can (and should!) be worshiped for his achievements, his very nature demands worship from every living creature. We can see this unique Colossians 1:15-20.

The Preeminence of Christ

Underline or circle the titles Paul uses to describe Jesus:

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities
—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place
in everything.

The two main titles Paul uses to summarize Christ's supremacy are _____ and _____.

These two titles ultimately serve to describe Jesus’ preeminence or superiority to every thing and every one (vs. 18). Preeminence is a unique way of describing someone who “holds the highest rank in a group.” In Colossians, Paul illustrates Jesus is in first place according to creation (vs. 15) and the new creation (vs. 18), thus everything falls under the jurisdiction of Christ’s reign. Understanding Christ as supreme teaches us about His divinity. Groups who have erred on Christ’s divinity have misinterpreted this passage:

	Mormonism	Jehovah’s Witness
View of Christ	The Son is one of three gods.	Jesus is not God but was the archangel Michael.
View of Firstborn	Jesus is the firstborn spiritually, the “spirit child” of the Father and Mother.	Jesus is the firstborn, meaning created by Jehovah. Thus he is not co-eternal with the Father.
View of Image of God	Image means that the Father and Son are distinct beings; both divine and embodied (as the Father has a glorified body).	Image means that Jesus is <i>like</i> God but not God Himself

What does this have to do with worship? In short, EVERYTHING. Since Christ is the supreme being, there is no goal in life nor any higher pursuit than to live for His glory!

Christ as the Image of God

“The very nature and character of God have been perfectly revealed in Christ; in him the invisible has become visible.” - Peter O’Brien

An _____ is an object that is shaped to resemble the form or appearance of something. Matthew 22:20-“ And He said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?”

Paul applies this kind of likeness to Jesus, explicitly noting that He is of the exact same nature as God. Jesus is not an additional God (which would violate Deut. 5:7), but He is God revealed. This is how Jesus describes Himself in John 14:7. This claim that Jesus is equal to God has two significant meanings for our mandate to worship.

“There is one and only one God, eternally existing and fully expressed in three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each member of the Godhead is equally God, each is eternally God, and each is fully God-not three gods but three Persons of the one Godhead. Each Person is equal in essence as each possesses fully the identically same, eternal divine nature, yet each is also an eternal and distinct personal expression of the one undivided divine nature. The Son, then, is fully God.” - Bruce Ware

1. Christ's likeness means that He worthy of _____ like the Father.

Jesus' shared nature with the Father cannot be unhinged. Therefore, since God the Father is worthy of worship in His essence, the same is true of the Son of God. There are many examples in Scripture of worshiping being directly applied to the Son. References include: Matthew 2:2, 11, 14:22-23, Revelation 19:10, John 20:28.

2. Christ's likeness means that He _____ the Image of God in man.

"Image of God" reverberates backwards to the creation account in Genesis.

Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our _____, according to Our _____; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 God created man in His own _____, in the _____ of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Adam was created to reflect God's nature and authority on earth. This was also a familial title, meaning that Adam was God's son (Gen. 5:1-4). Unfortunately, one of the results of the fall in Genesis 3 was the marring of God's image in all of humanity, separating the Father-son dynamic between God and man (Isa. 59:2).

“A portrait once effaced must be restored from the original. Thus the Son of the Father came to seek, save, and regenerate. No other way was possible. Blinded himself, man could not see to heal. The witness of creation had failed to preserve him, and could not bring him back. The Word alone could do so. But how? Only by revealing Himself as Man.”- Athanasius

Thankfully, Christ's substitutionary act on the cross as the image of God ushers in a new creation that is being conformed (restored) into His image (Rom. 8:29). Christ's work essentially makes worship possible again! (Col. 3:10)

Christ as Firstborn

“Christ is unique, being distinguished from all creation. He is both prior to and supreme over that creation since he is its Lord.” - Peter O'Brien

While the title “Image of God” describes Christ's relationship with the Father, the title Firstborn describes Christ's relationship with creation. Firstborn is a designation that has deep roots in the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament the Firstborn was the _____ Of the family. Genesis 27 By deceiving his father, Jacob was able to receive the Firstborn blessing.

Firstborn is also connected to a position of prominence and superiority. God denotes His special relationship with Israel by calling them His firstborn son. Exodus 4:22

Lastly, Firstborn doesn't necessarily mean the _____ child. This title is applied was applied to King David to describe his prominence over Israel, despite David being the youngest son of Jesse. Psalm 89:27

Therefore, when Paul describes Christ as Firstborn, He is describing Jesus as the cause of all that is created in order that His superiority would be displayed. This is the scope of His sovereignty in Colossians 1:15-16.

Christ is also Firstborn from the dead (vs. 18). While Christ is the head and source of all creation, His death inaugurates a new creation, one that has been redeemed. That group of redeemed people is now the _____ (Eph. 1:22-23).

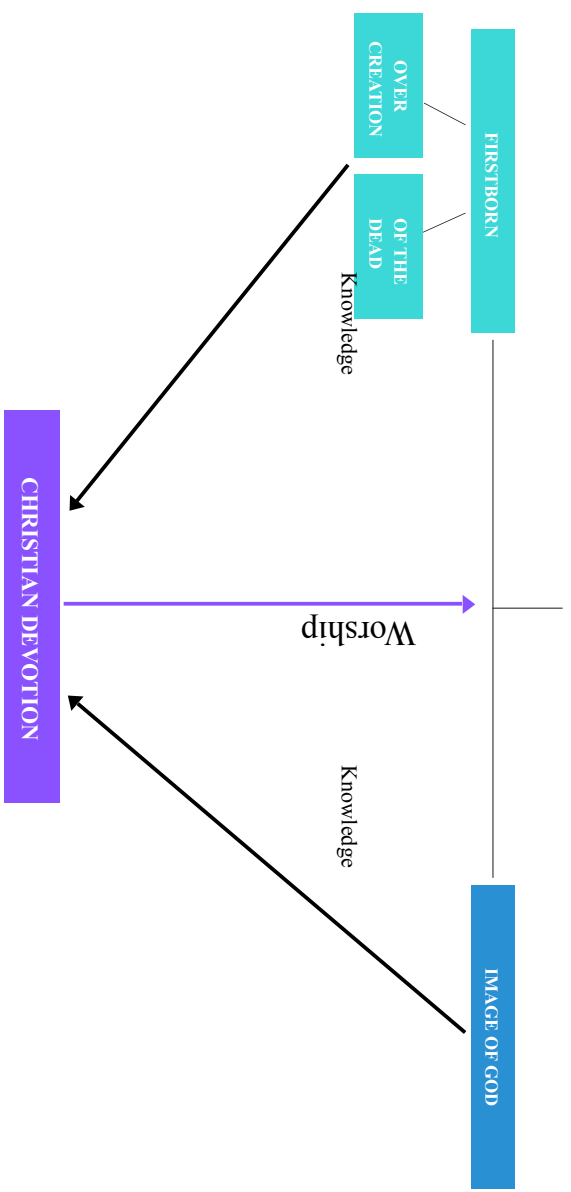
What does Christ's title as Firstborn mean for worship? Paul teaches the Colossian Christians (and every Christian since) are now redefined as the church, which is headed by Christ. Christ's governance demands that these newly created people live newly created lives! Paul will dedicate the rest of his epistle demonstrating what that new life in Christ looks like (Colossians 3).

But this demand for worship is not limited to those who are redeemed. Since Christ is the Firstborn over creation, He is entitled to worship from every living thing! Any attempt to place anyone or anything as supreme is a cosmic affront to the One who is actually responsible for creation. We should not devote our worship to things that have been created! While humanity is blind to the truth of Christ's rule and authority, there will come a day where no one will be confused as to who the preeminent One is and His deserving of full allegiance.

Philippians 2:9-11: 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus Christ

Col 1:15-20
The Preeminent One



Worshipping the Preeminent One

Now that we have established the necessity to worship. What does that look like in Colossians? Consider Paul's instructions in Chapters 3-4. Without the Paul's view of such an exalted Christ, the high standard of devout living has little basis. For the Christian, living well according to the Word of God is in fact worship that is singularly and rightfully due to Christ. To know and worship Him is our supreme duty in life.