

December 26, 2004 by Steve Brandon



Worship in Heaven

Revelation 4-5

1. Worship in Heaven is God-Centered (chapter 4).
2. Worship in Heaven is Christ-Centered (chapter 5).

Every Sunday morning at Rock Valley Bible Church, we gather for a time of what we call, "corporate worship." It's the one time in the week when we come together to worship the Lord as a community. In many ways, our gatherings are a taste of what we will do for eternity in heaven. Our worship consists of singing praise to God. In heaven, we will do this for eternity. Our worship consists of praying to God. In heaven, we will do this for eternity. Our worship consists of learning about God. In heaven, we will do this for eternity.

This morning, I would like for us to get a taste of worship in heaven. We will be looking closely at Revelation chapters four and five. My aim with my message this morning is to show you perfect worship, that you might improve upon your worship. By better understanding these things, we as a church might become better worshipers of God. If you want to become better at something, the best way to do it is by observing those who are best at it. If you want to be a better basketball player, you watch the NBA. If you want to be a better musician, you listen to the London Symphony Orchestra. If you want to be a better theologian, you read the great theologians of the past. If you want to be a better worshiper, you look to heaven to see what worship in heaven is like. It's been said that if you dangle over the pit of hell for 15 seconds, you will live differently. My desire this morning is to show you heaven, so that you might worship differently. There is no greater passage in all of the Bible for observing the worship in heaven than in Revelations 4 and 5.

To be sure, within these pages of Revelations, there is much mystery. The experience described there is so unlike our experience here upon the earth, that we won't be able to understand everything. Perhaps, that's the point! These chapters speak about a throne, which is unlike any throne we have ever seen. These chapters speak about living creatures, who are unlike any creatures that we have ever seen. These chapters speak about twenty-four elders who can only be identified by speculation. These chapters speak about a scroll, of which we are unsure of its contents. Rather than getting bogged down in the details, we are going to take a general sweep of these chapters to glean their main point: What is worship in heaven like?

Let's begin by setting the stage. The book of Revelation was written by the apostle John, when he was exiled on the island called Patmos (Rev. 1:9). The Lord appeared to him and told him to "write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches" scattered throughout Asia Minor (Rev. 1:10). Chapters 2 and 3 contain seven messages to be sent to these churches. When John finished writing these letters, He received another vision, which he describes in chapter 4. John writes, "After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, 'Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this'" (Rev. 4:1). John looked up to the heavens and saw a door that was opened. John heard an invitation to go through the door, "Come up here." He was told to come so that he might see more things, that he might write them down. How do you go through a heavenly door? Only by the power of the Lord. The next verse says, "At once I was in the Spirit" (Rev. 4:2). Presumably, while in the Spirit, John was taken through the door to see heaven.

In verse 2, John tells us what he sees: "and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne." This throne becomes the focus of the next several verses. As I read them, I ask you to picture what the throne is like. Use your imagination. I encourage you to close your eyes to picture the scene. That might sound strange as I don't remember having asked you to do this before, but I think that it may help. It will help you to put out all distractions.

"And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian" (Rev. 4:3). Jasper and carnelian are precious stones, which give off brilliant colors as light is reflected from them. Jasper is probably a clear stone, much like quartz or diamonds, through which light becomes dazzling. Carnelian is a dark reddish, orangeish, brownish stone. It is blood red. John used these stones to describe the appearance of the one on who sat on the throne. Picture in your mind, this beautiful, colorful glow with a reddish tint.

John continues, "and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald" (Rev. 4:3). We normally think of a rainbow having seven colors. But, John here describes it as having the appearance of an emerald, which is a greenish stone. So, picture in your mind, this colorful rainbow surrounding the throne, with various shades of green, from dark to light. There is forest green, olive green, and spring green. Do you have this picture in mind?

There's more to John's vision of heaven. "Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads" (Rev. 4:4). As John scanned the scene in heaven, he saw more than one throne. In fact, he saw twenty-five thrones. The one throne was in the middle and took prominence, but there were twenty-four other thrones. Picture them in a circle, completely surrounding this bright throne in the middle, all of them facing in toward the brilliant throne. Upon each of these thrones sat an older man, clothed in white, with a crown on his head.

The picture continues by focusing back at the middle throne, he says, "From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of

thunder" (Rev. 4:5). Not only was this center throne brilliant in appearance, it was full of activity, drawing much attention to itself. It's no wonder that John first saw this throne rather than the twenty-four surrounding it. It was flashing light and making noise. Picture this throne as a bright storm cloud, with lightning emanating from it. And imagine the corresponding sounds of thunder being made. Do you have the picture?

"And before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal" (Rev. 4:5-6). In front of the throne there are several things. There is more light. There are seven torches of fire -- the seven spirits of God. What this is, I have no clue. I can only imagine these seven raging fires at the foot of the throne. Not only is there more light, there is also a sea of glass. It is like crystal. Picture a mirror on the floor, which would reflect all of this radiance to make it doubly bright. Do you have the picture in your mind?

"And around the throne, on each side of the throne are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind" (Rev 4:6). These are strange looking creatures. You have never seen such creatures before. Brookfield zoo doesn't have these type of creatures. Picture their heads, with hundreds of eye balls all around them. All looking in different directions at the same time. Each of these four creatures are unique, "the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within"(Rev. 4:7-8). Picture a lion, an ox, one with a face of a man, and a flying eagle. Picture these creatures with six wings, moving, and darting about the throne. Though their heads are covered with eyes, they have mouths somewhere, for John writes that "day and night they never cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!'"(Rev. 4:8). They constantly repeat this chant. They never stop saying it. Over and over again they say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" Do you picture it?

I can only guess that these four creatures are nearer to the throne than the twenty-four thrones, upon which the elders sit, so that each of these elders can watch and listen to these creatures hovering and fluttering about before them. But, far from being passive observers, the elders are actively engaged in worship as well. Listen to verses 9 and 10: "And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever." So, picture these twenty-four elders who were seated on their thrones, getting off of their seats and falling down on their face before the One on the throne and worshipping Him. Picture them doing this whenever these living creatures give glory to God. As these living creatures never cease to give God glory, these elders are constantly bowing down in worship before God. It's up and down, it's on their throne and off of their throne, on their throne, and off their throne again. In this process, they aren't silent either. Verses 10 and 11 tell us that "they cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 'Worthy are you, our Lord and God to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.'" As these elders fall on their face, they cast their crowns before the throne in worship of the God who created all things.

Do you have the picture in your mind? The throne in the middle, with the Almighty God on it. His appearance is of bright, shiny jewels. From him are lightening flashes and thunder claps. The floor is like a giant mirror that is reflecting everything. There are seven torches burning at his feet. These four strange-looking creatures are flying around the throne saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" These twenty-four elders, clothed in white are constantly casting their crowns before the one on the throne, saying, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created." ¹

This may sound a bit like science fiction with these strange creatures and these strange appearances, but I guarantee you that it is not. This is reality. This isn't Star Wars. This isn't Lord of the Rings. This is the God we worship. This is the God to whom we pray. He is high and exalted, and He is the focus of heaven. This is the God to whom we sing. This is the God in whom we trust. We trust in the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come! (Rev. 4:8). We trust in the Lord our God, who created all things! (verse 11).

My first point this morning is that ...

1. Worship in Heaven is God-Centered (chapter 4).

Though chapter 4 describes many things going on in heaven (you have the creatures and the elders and the throne and the floor, and all of this activity). The center of all of it is God. He is the object of worship. He is the subject of worship. He is the focus of it all. Everything attests to this. The glory of the throne speaks to the glory of the One upon the throne! The twenty-four elders encircle the throne, placing their focus not on themselves, but upon God, who is in the middle of it all! Their bowing prostrate to the throne puts attention upon God, and not upon themselves. The four living creatures seek to bring glory and honor to God! The words that are spoken give glory to God. You have lots of noise and lots of activity. But, the only words spoken are words of praise to God!

In fact, let's look at these words for a few moments. In verse 8, the creatures never cease to say, ... "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" Notice, their words focus on the character of God. These words focus upon God's ...

1. Infinite goodness. This is what the word "holy" means, which these creatures repeat three times, "holy, holy, holy." To be "holy" is to be separated and set-apart and utterly distinct. To be "holy" is to be pure and unstained. It is to be perfectly good. There is no sin within God. There is no stain or spot within God. When you think about this, you ought to be driven to despair. When Isaiah saw the same vision in Isaiah 6, he was "undone." He was a wreck. The most righteous person in the land was devastated when he saw his sin before God. Among men, he was doing pretty well. Before God, he had no chance. Any sin that is placed before infinite goodness looks like a polluted mess.

But God is holy. He is thrice holy!

These creatures also speak about His ...

2. Infinite greatness. Notice how they identify God as "the Lord God Almighty!" It is one thing to be mighty. It is another thing altogether to be "almighty." There is only one who is "almighty" and that is the Lord. Were there another being in this universe that had more power than God, that being would be "almighty." This is what it means. The Greek word used here literally means that God possesses "all strength." There is

nobody as strong as God. There is nobody as powerful as God. If all other forces combined their strength, God would still be more powerful than all of them. God created the entire universe without losing any strength. When the winds blow and the storms come, the sun rises. The moon shines. These are but the "fringes of his ways" (Job 26:14). Think of the greatest display of power that you have ever seen: earthquake, hurricane, typhoon, or forest fire. It's just a whisper of God's power (Job 26:14).

3. Infinite endurance.

Verse 8 says, "who was and is and is to come!" God never began. God always is. God will never cease to be. God is eternal. Before this world came into existence, God was. This world exists because God is. Long after this world is burned with fire, God will always be. To help you with this, imagine that you have a very long piece of paper, with each end of the paper infinitely extended. And then, take out a pencil and inscribe a short line on that paper. That line represents all time as we know it. Eternity is the paper.

But even these words don't begin to explain the eternity of God, because God isn't even confined to time. God has no present. God has no future. A.W. Tozer says that God lives in the "everlasting now." ² The words like begin, end, later, and after are so creaturely. In using these words, God descends to us. In and of Himself, they have no meaning.

This is the God that we worship. We worship a God of infinite goodness, infinite greatness, and infinite being. But there's more. When the elders get their opportunity of giving praise to God, they use the words of verse 11, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created." We find these elders simply affirming everything that these four living creatures were doing. Verse 9 says that these creatures were giving "glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne." And these elders were simply another voice affirming the affirmations of these creatures. They said, "Yes, indeed, O Lord, You are worthy to receive glory and honor and power." Why? Because God is the Creator. God created all things. By the mere pleasure and intention of Almighty God, He brought everything into being (John 1:3). Nothing came into being apart from the sovereign will and decree of God!

As creatures, we are in a position of dependence. We owe giving our Creator glory, honor, and power. And those who don't do so are blaspheming God because they give something else higher honor than God. When you understand how all-powerful God is, you will understand what a mistake it is to withhold the glory that is due God Almighty. People spend eternity in hell because they refuse to acknowledge their Creator with the glory He deserves.

At this point in my message, I would like to bring it around to us. I would like to ask, "How does this compare with worship at Rock Valley Bible Church?" Certainly, there are elements here that we cannot possibly emulate. In the front of our stage, we don't have lightning flashes coming forth. We don't have thunder claps. We don't have these types of creatures flying around, nor do we have pictures of these types of things, as the tabernacle had, on its tent and on the mercy seat (Ex. 25:19; 37:8; 1 Kings 6:24-27). But, this is the same God that we worship, and we ought to worship God as infinite goodness, infinite greatness, infinite endurance, and as our creator.

When you come here on Sundays to worship the Lord, do these types of thoughts spin around in your mind? Are you aware that the One you are worshipping is enthroned in the center of heaven? Are you aware that He is the only being worthy of worship? Are you aware that He deserves our complete submission and praise? Or, do you come with a lackluster type of attitude? Do you have an attitude like this: "been there, done that." or "OK God, I guess I need to worship you today?" Such an attitude misses worship entirely. The elders and four creatures are not lackluster about their worship. They are fully into it. Their words, their actions, and their thoughts are all actively involved.

God is everything and He demands our all! I love how John MacArthur has defined worship. He said, "Worship is all that we are responding to all that He is." ³ I remember hearing of a church advertising their worship services by saying the the most important person at their worship services is God! That's exactly right. The heavenly scene in Revelation 4 isn't about the creatures or the thrones or the elders, it is about God. Worship in heaven is God-centered! It ought to be no different at Rock Valley Bible Church.

Before we proceed to our second point this morning, I want you to realize that this has implications on the types of things that we will do in our worship services. Everything that we do, must have God in its center. Everything we sing, must have God in its center. Everything we pray, must be directed toward the Lord. There are things that have crept into church services in recent days that have no place in worship services. Because, they are bringing glory to the performance of a man, rather than giving glory to God. There is a style of preaching that is man-centered. There is a style of singing that is man-centered. There is a way to take a service of worship and so turn things upside down that it no longer is about God, but is about those attending the service. Perhaps a good litmus test for corporate worship services would be to ask the question, "Would such an activity be appropriate for worship in heaven?" Perhaps you might simply say it another way, "Is such an activity God-centered?"

This doesn't take us out of the service. It doesn't take our feelings and emotions and expressions out of it. But it takes it all and directs it to God. You simply need to read the Psalms to see how often the Psalmist refer to themselves and their conditions. However, in so doing, it is always in a context of dependence or trust or praise to God and not to themselves.

2. Worship in Heaven is Christ-Centered (chapter 5).

In and of ourselves, we would have no possibility of worshipping God in a worthy manner. The role of Christ must be remembered, and it is described in chapter 5.

The drama begins in verse 1, "Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals" (Rev. 5:1). Picture with me the majestic one on the throne with something in His hand. It's a scroll. It's a piece of paper that is rolled up. Of all of the things that John saw in this great vision, he draws our attention to this scroll. He could have talked more about the throne or the creatures or the elders. He could have spoken more about this sea of glass or the lightning flashes. But, he places our attention upon this scroll. This rolled up piece of paper in the hand of God upon the throne. John could see seven scrolls on it. These

were certainly wax seals that were sealed with some type of signet ring.

It's difficult to know exactly what the significance of this scroll is. There is much discussion in the commentaries about this. It's not in the scope of my message this morning to dig into its precise meaning of this scroll. The aim of my message this morning is to look at the worship that takes place in heaven. But, let me say that this scroll is very important. Somehow, it relates to God's salvation plan, which we will see in verse nine in a few moments. Also, it relates somehow to the establishment of God's kingdom upon the earth, as begins when the scrolls are opened in chapter 6.

In 5:2, we see the great anxiety that this scroll has caused: "And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?'" (Rev. 5:2) This scroll couldn't merely be opened by anybody. The one who opened it needed to be "worthy" enough to open it. And so, the search was on for such a person. "And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or look into it" (Rev. 5:3). Nobody was found who was qualified to do this. There was no angel in heaven worthy to open the scroll. There was no man on earth worthy to open the scroll. None of the four living creatures were worthy. None of the 24 elders were worthy. In the entire universe, there was not anyone worthy to open the scroll. This caused great distress for John. He wrote, "and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it" (Rev. 5:4).

Watching this drama unfold affected John's emotions. Just as a movie might bring us to tears, so also did this scene bring John to uncontrollable grief. He knew of the importance of the scroll. He knew that it needed to be opened. But, none could open it. It caused him great sorrow. But then, he was comforted. "And one of the elders said to me, 'Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals'" (Rev. 5:5). Onto the stage of heaven walks the hero. He is described as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," which is a Messianic prophecy that you can trace back to Genesis 49:9-10. He is described as the "Root of David," which is yet another Messianic prophecy (Isa. 11:1, 10; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8). He is described as the one who "has conquered."

In verse 6, we get a further description of who this is: "And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (Rev. 5:6). Here we see clearly who it is. It's none other than Jesus, Himself. The Lamb of God, who took away the sin of the world by His sacrifice upon the cross. He looks a bit different in this vision that John saw. His scars from the cross are still evident. But, He has a few more eyes than he had upon the earth, which somehow signify the spirits of God, perhaps representing His presence and knowledge. He has grown a few horns, which are probably representative of His power and authority. These changes reflect that Jesus has conquered. He has conquered through His wounds.

The next thing that happens is that our hero does a bold thing. We read in verse 7, "And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne." We often consider it to be bad manners to take something away from another -- the greater the person, the greater the offense is. And yet, here, Jesus comes and rips this scroll out of the hand of Almighty God, who was seated on the throne. Jesus was the only being in the universe who was worthy to take the scroll from the hand of the Lord. If you are I were to take the scroll from the hand of God, we would be dust in a moment. What made Him worthy was the work He accomplished on the cross.

All of those in this heavenly vision focus their attention upon the work that Jesus did upon the cross. Verse 8 says, "And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. These four living creatures and these twenty-four elders had been worshiping the one on the throne. But, as the Lamb takes the scroll from the hand of the Almighty, their worship is now directed toward the Lamb. They express their worship by playing joyful music on their harps. They express their worship by the fragrant aroma of incense, which represents the prayers of saints. Think of the pleas and the cries for help that have been stored up in this bowl. Think of the number of times that the saints down through the ages have prayed, "Our Father, who art in heaven, ... Thy Kingdom come!." As these prayers rise before the throne, they begin to be answered at this moment.

Their words focus their attention upon the work of Jesus. Verse 9 says, "And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.'" They use the same expressions in the worship of Jesus as they did in the worship of the Almighty upon the throne, calling Him "worthy." They focus upon the cross of Christ. First, they proclaim, "You were slain." They recognized that the Lamb had been killed upon the cross. They recognized the significance of this perfect sacrifice. Second, they proclaim, "By Your blood you ransomed people for God." When Jesus poured out His blood, He purchased people for God. It's here that we get a sense of what this scroll is. The scroll contains the legal requirements to accomplish our salvation. It's because of His work on the cross that He can take the scroll. No other man or animal or creature was able to do this. It took that Lamb of God, dying upon the cross to accomplish this. It was the righteous for the unrighteous, the sinless for the sinful, and the holy for the profane.

Notice that when Jesus died, He accomplished the redemption of specific people. Jesus didn't make salvation possible at the cross. Jesus accomplished salvation at the cross. He did this from every people group upon the planet. Jesus didn't merely die for Jews. He also died for Romans and for Russians. He died for Greeks and for Germans. He died for Americans and for Africans. He died for Canadians and for Koreans. He died for Iraqis and for Iranians. You name the people group, and there were people in that nation for whom Christ died.

Jesus transformed the ones for whom He died. Listen to what is said about Him, "You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:10). Those He saves, He joins together to form a united kingdom. No longer are they separated by national customs and languages and ethnic distinctions. Rather, they become a unified nation, who will reign upon the earth. Please understand that the earth we are talking about will be a new earth, with no sin and no rebellion and with the New Jerusalem. It will be a heavenly earth. Notice how the rest of the chapter focuses its attention upon the worship of Jesus: "Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing'" (Rev. 5:11-12).

Joining the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders are hundreds of millions of angels joining the chorus. The words that are used in the text indicates that there's a huge number of angels. And they all are worshiping Jesus Christ with a loud voice. The volume of praise in this scene is deafening. To get a sense of what is happening here, I want for us, a congregation of a hundred to say verse 12 together in unison. As you say it, I want all of you to say it with a loud voice. "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." As loud as that sounds, it still doesn't compare to the volume of praise in heaven. And, there's more. Verse 13 says, "And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them saying, 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!'" The volume of the praise offered up to Jesus Christ is increased. Joining the heavenly chorus is the earthly chorus. Every creature that God has ever made is joining in this chorus, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" Of this scene, Simon Kistemaker said,

"All intelligent beings in God's created universe sing his praises: the saints and angels in heaven, the birds in the sky, God's people on earth, and all living beings on land and in the sea. The overwhelming chorus of all these voices, in praise to God and to the Lamb, defies human imagination." ⁴

It's an amazing scene of worship. Chapter 5 comes to a close in verse 14, "And the four living creatures said, 'Amen!' and the elders fell down and worshiped." It's as if they put their seal and affirmation upon the worship that takes place in heaven.

As I bring my message this morning to a close, I want for you to notice the object of the worship in heaven. Who is receiving the worship in verse 9? It's Jesus who is worthy. Who is receiving the worship in verse 12? It is Jesus, the Lamb of God. Who is receiving the worship in verse 13? The one on the throne and the Lamb. This is God Almighty and Jesus. This is as clear a statement that you will find in the Bible for the deity of Jesus Christ. Don't let anybody ever tell you that you ought not to be worshiping Jesus for He was just a man. In heaven, the focus of worship is upon the Lord God Almighty and upon Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

Worship in heaven is God-centered and Christ-centered. It ought to be no different at Rock Valley Bible Church. Our worship needs to achieve a balance between these two centers. We worship the Almighty God and his awesome power. We worship the Lamb of God and the majesty of the cross. They are one and the same! And yet, there appears to be a sort of distinction between them. One God, three persons. Our worship is to be God-centered. Our worship is to be Christ centered. They are mixed together. We could not worship God, the Father, apart from God, the Son. It is the intention of my second point this morning to focus our attention upon how our worship needs to be Christ-centered. In our worship, we need to remember and focus upon Christ and His mighty work upon the cross.

In recent days, I have come to learn of this more and more. I have come to learn of the immense value and worth and importance of the cross of Christ in all aspects of my life. I am coming to understand, as it says in Galatians 6:14, "May it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord, Jesus Christ." I am coming to understand why the cross ought to be at the forefront of my attention. This needs to be true of our church as well. Jesus Christ must stand in the center of all that we do as a church. We are a "Christian" church, which means that we worship Jesus.

Certainly the language of verse 13 includes worship to God, the Father. But the tendency in many churches is to forget the Lamb, which is the heart of my point. Perhaps I can illustrate this. I was recently among a group of dear Christian friends, who are solid believers in Christ. We were in a setting where we had several opportunities to pray together. I noticed that in every one of the prayers that were prayed, Jesus Christ was entirely left out. Expressions of God's omnipotence were prayed. Acknowledgment was made of God's creating role. God was worshiped for His holiness. God's presence among us was acknowledged. But Jesus or His work upon the cross were never mentioned, with the exception of a closing, "in Jesus' name" at the end of most prayers. I'm not passing judgment upon them. I'm not seeking to condemn their behavior. It's simply an observation of how easy it is to lose the centrality of Jesus Christ in our worship. At Rock Valley Bible Church, may this never be.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 26, 2004 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] During this portion of the sermon, I had the adults close their eyes to attempt to keep out distractions as they attempted to picture this amazing scene. However, I had the children attempt to draw a picture of this scene on their children's notes. After my message, one child, named Matthew Hilbert, came up and showed me his drawing. I thought it worthy of being included with these notes. If you are interested in viewing it, click [here](#).

[2] Knowledge of the Holy, pp. 39-40.

[3] True Worship, Part 7, Tape GC 2010.

[4] New Testament Commentary, Exposition of the Book of Revelation, Simon J. Kistemaker, p. 213.