

Pirates Who Try to Capture the Moon

Revelation 3:21-5:14

September 16, 2007

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On October 13, we'll plan on being back in the book of Genesis. But for now, I'd like to preach on a few things that are critical for the life of our body.

For the last few weeks, we preached on the second thing we ask everyone to commit to, who names Lookout as their church, and that was **small groups**.

Today I'm preaching on the first thing, and that is **worship**. To do that, I'd like to look at a passage we studied almost seven years ago and read my favorite children's book, which I first heard from Al Andrews. If after the service someone says, "What was that sermon about?" I want you to answer: *The Pirate Who Tried to Capture the Moon*.¹

There was once a fierce pirate who loved nothing.

He lived alone on an island where he strode about in armor, waving a broad sword. And he watched for ships to capture. Through his glass, he spied the ship of flowers, with its daffodil flag and its sails of Queen Anne's lace. . . .

[Paraphrase] And the pirate captured just about every ship that you could think of: the ship of flowers, the ship of horses, the ship of birds. Yet each time he captured a ship, he'd look in the sky and see the moon sailing as it pleased. Then he'd shake his sword and yell, "Some day I'll capture you too, moon!" But he couldn't figure out how to capture the moon.

The pirate paced back and forth in his rusty armor, back and forth, to and fro. He walked in circles, day and night, until he passed an old ship of books he had captured long ago.

He searched its broken decks and shredded sails until he found a book that told all about the moon. Then the pirate laughed.

He took that book and six horses and sailed for land. He harnessed the mares to his ship, and he ripped across the earth—he ripped over fields and streams, leaving a scar. Slowly, the pirate who loved nothing moved over the land in his ship, looking for everything the moon loved.

The moon loves to shine through curtains, said the book. It loves to float in

pools of water. It likes to peak over small hills. The moon loves poetry.

The pirate slashed curtains from farmhouses and drapes from mansions. He cut curtains from stages, and he loaded them all onto his ship.

Into barrels he scooped frog ponds and reflecting pools and swimming holes. He chopped at small hills with his sword and shoveled them into his hold.

He captured poets and everything else he knew the moon loved. He

swiped candles from the tables of Italian restaurants. He grabbed sadly playing violins from under the chins of gypsies.

He kidnapped lovers as they gazed at each other softly, walking hand in hand. He netted baying wolves, and children who danced all by themselves in the middle of the night.

And the pirate sailed that bursting ship back to his island. And he waited. Clouds moved across the sky. The wind blew the empty sea. And finally, the moon rose.

But when it looked down, it saw that everything it loved was gone. So it moved down to look a little closer. And the fierce pirate, sitting on his island, laughed. The moon looked again, but still it saw no curtains, it saw no small hills. So again it came a little closer.

The pirate laughed again, and stood up to sharpen his sword. And the moon looked and saw nothing and came still closer. It looked and looked through streets and in villages and down empty wells. There were no pools of water. There were no poets, no lonely dancers.

So it came closer still.

And the pirate, seeing the moon come lower, yelled out, “Moon! I have captured every ship and everything you love, and now I will capture you!”

That’s enough for now.

You know, if you really think you *own* anything, you’re a pirate. For everything belongs to God, so anything we think we own or control or keep for ourselves must be stolen.

Hey, did you know that the Psalms refer to the moon as the faithful witness? The moon is the faithful witness to the sun, the faithful witness to the light in the dark, night sky.

The Psalms also refer to the faithful witness as the seed of David. The Revelation (1:5) reveals that Jesus is the faithful witness.

The moon is the faithful witness, and the faithful witness is Jesus. How do old pirates try to capture Jesus—the faithful witness?

The apostle John was an old pirate. In fact, Jesus gave him the nickname “Son of Thunder.” Once he tried to call down fire on a whole Samaritan village. In his old age, he was exiled to the island of Patmos. That’s where he received the Revelation.

In Revelation 4:1, John writes, “After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven!” “After this”—after *what*? Well, chapter 4 comes immediately after chapters 2 and 3, which are the letters to the seven angels (*angellos*, spirits), of the seven churches.

When we read those letters, we find that these seven churches in Asia Minor had a ton of problems, and each one a call. Each letter ends with a call to conquer, and thus a question: How will they, how will *we*, conquer?

Now, let’s have some sympathy for John, for he considers himself their pastor. And now he’s exiled and imprisoned. What’s he supposed to do? What’s he supposed to say “after this”?

You know, we’ve got a ton of problems here at Lookout . . . basically all the stuff

in those seven churches and all the stuff in you and me. And what am I to do? What am I to say? There are a couple thousand people and thirty-some staff, each with a different perspective.

And to make matters worse, I'm supposed to preach "the Word."

- Have you ever tried to comprehend the Word?
- How do I capture the Word and apply it to your life?

I don't know.

Well, the seven churches had all sorts of problems and one common problem.

- It's reflected in the references to the Nicolaitans and that woman Jezebel.
- It shows up in apathy, immorality, and the lust for control.

After the legalism of the Jews, the knowledge of the Greeks was the first, great, cultural enemy of the early church: Gnosticism. It's the belief that we're saved through "gnosis," that is, we're saved through "know"-ing stuff.

That is, we're saved by stealing and eating fruit from the tree of "know"-ledge. To a Jew, that looks like legalism; to a Greek that looks like Gnosticism.

So a Jew is tempted to capture God with the law (nail Him to the tree of law). A Greek is tempted to capture God with philosophy and theology—knowing stuff (nail Him to the tree of knowledge).

Eugene Petersen writes, "The Gnostics gossiped about God, and the essential nature of gossip is that it talks about people instead of to them."

It was the Greeks and later the Enlightenment that taught us modern people that "man is the measure of all things." And so, if man wants to *know* a thing, man must measure that thing, capture that thing, and comprehend that thing. If you want to know the moon, you conquer the moon . . . you go to the moon and capture a rock so you can say, "I know what the moon is. The moon is quartz and feldspar. No mystery there."

- To know a tree, you cut it down and count its rings.
- To know a frog, you capture it and cut it into tiny pieces.
- To know a wife . . . well, at this point the modern man encounters some trouble.

I'm just saying that "after this"—after all these problems, we expect some practical application points. We expect a workbook, we expect some gnosis, we expect some advice on how to conquer our problems.

And to be honest, God is our biggest problem. How do we comprehend God?

A soldier dove into a foxhole under fire. As he dug down into the dirt, he unearthed a crucifix. He held it up

to the chaplain lying next to him and screamed, "How do you work this thing? How do you work this thing!"

“After this” we expect some practical advice on “how to work this thing.” And that is exactly what we *do not* get.

You do realize the letters to the seven churches are not addressed to the seven churches. They’re addressed to the seven *angels* or spirits of the seven churches. But what comes next, “after this,” *is* addressed to the seven churches and to us. It’s what John is to do.

Jesus told John, “Write down what you see [this vision] and send it to the churches.” So the part we do understand is technically not *for us*. And the part we don’t understand *is*.

Revelation 4:1-2:

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 [beyond this, “meta tauta”].” At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.

“In heaven.” Where and when is heaven? That’s a hard question. Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is “at hand” and it’s “among you.” Paul said, “The Jerusalem above is our mother.” Yet it’s still to come, right?

Remember this picture from our Genesis series?

Time (“chronos”) had a beginning. And according to Revelation 10:6, it appears to have an end. (Jesus is the beginning and the end.)

In Scripture, the fullness of chronological time is represented by the number *seven*. There are seven days of creation, and we’re still being created in God’s image: the image of Jesus (Rom. 8:29; I Cor. 15:49; Col. 1:15, 3:10). So we saw that according to Scripture and physics, we are in the sixth day on the edge of the seventh day (the completion of time).

Jesus just said, “Come up here” to heaven. What John sees is after a series of seven—the letters to the seven churches—and before Jesus opens the seven seals, seven trumpets, seven thunders, and seven bowls.

So where’s heaven? It’s here [at the end of time] and here [above the timeline] and here [below the timeline] and here [before the timeline].

And God is everywhere. I mean, it’s not simply in the series of sevens, not simply *on* the timeline. I mean, it must be outside of space and time as we know it.

God is certainly outside of space and time as we know it, and Jesus says, “Hey, John, come look at things from my perspective.” So, as I heard recently, that perspective is not “insight” but “*out-sight*.” You know, we say that Jesus left heaven and came to earth. He was “incarnated.” Well, now John is “*out-carnated*.”

So how’s he going to explain to us what he sees? How’s he going to get heaven into a 5” x 8” box in space and time called *my brain*? In other words, how can we

comprehend heaven? Even more, how can we compre-hend God or know God?

You see, you can know things *less* than yourself by conquering, capturing, and comprehending. But things greater than yourself and larger than the box you call your brain must require something else.

There are different ways of knowing and different things to be known. There's one way to know *things*, and there's another way to know *persons*.

- What if a person contains something from beyond space and time?
- What if God is a person? a Spirit?
- What if knowing God is less like counting rings in a tree and more like dancing with my wife?

You can conquer, capture, and comprehend things *less* than you. You can measure things *less* than you but not things *greater* than you.

So if “man is the measure of all things,” then you must believe all things are *less* than you. Then you are the king of all things, but all things in your kingdom are *dead*. You may know everything, but nothing is worth knowing. You've been crowned king . . . of the dead.

- To know a tree, cut it down and count its rings.
- To know a frog, capture it, kill it, and reduce it to its parts.
- To know my wife . . . well, I could capture it, kill it, and reduce it to its parts. Sometimes I do that emotionally.

If I did that entirely, physically, I might know her anatomy and physiology. I might know *about* Susan—her dust, but not her breath. I might know *about* Susan, but I wouldn't *know* Susan. She'd be dead! And I would be a pirate—a murdering pirate.

So how can I know her? Well, I've found it's better to dance with her than try to comprehend her.

I wonder if in our desire to comprehend God we could murder God. That's a crazy idea . . . but maybe we could murder Him *to us*; make Him understandable and thereby declare Him dead. If you think you've got Him figured out, I bet He's not much fun to dance with.

Jesus said to the Pharisees and preachers:

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

Jesus is life, and He was inviting the Pharisees to dance.

Maybe we want to comprehend God more than commune with God . . . like old pirates trying to capture the moon. Remember how the old pirate who tried to capture the moon found a book about the moon and learned everything the moon liked and then conquered all those things to get to the moon?

Maybe the Bible is like a book on God, and we read it to find out what things God likes . . . things like good deeds, truth, love, mercy, kindness, and churches, and then we try to capture those things in order to capture God.

So “after this” we want five application points, a Bible study workbook, and ten

things I can do today to be a better Christian. I mean, we want the preacher to tell us:

What I have to know
What I have to do
What I must comprehend in order to conquer

We want to conquer God, for if we've conquered God, we would have conquered all our problems, right? We'd be worthy to wear a crown.

Revelation 4:1-11:

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." At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. 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.

Twenty-four elders . . . like the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel, and the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Rev. 21). So John probably looks and sees himself . . . and we know the rest of these guys: Peter, Andrew, Judah . . . those guys are old pirates sitting on thrones, and they are crowned with gold. They have conquered, and how did they conquer?

From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God [seven spirits for seven churches], and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: 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, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" 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. 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."

How do they conquer? They cast their knowledge, their control, their crowns before Him. You can know things less than yourself by capturing them and

comprehending them, but you can only know things greater than yourself through revelation in worship.

So you don't know God by comprehending Him; you know God because He comprehends you. You know God because He reveals His glory, and you cast your crown. You worship.

Now, maybe you think, "Oh great . . . *worship*. What if I don't feel like worshipping?" If you don't feel like worshipping, you are not seeing the throne. And if you say, "See the throne? I'm not in heaven; I'm on earth in space and time. How am I to see the glory on the throne?"—let's keep reading:

Revelation 5:1-13:

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. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. 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."

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 [into all the churches, into all space and time]. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. 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. 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, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

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!" 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!"

Do you believe Scripture? Even if you can't make it fit in your box? You don't have to comprehend the Word. You have to *believe* the Word.

You're not saved by what you comprehend;
you're saved by the One who comprehends you.

You're not saved by *gnosis*;
you're saved by the Lamb on the throne.

Look to the throne. Look to the throne. Where's the throne?

And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

"Worshiped."

Let's finish *The Pirate Who Tried to Capture the Moon*:

So [the moon] came closer still.

And the pirate, seeing the moon come lower, yelled out, "Moon! I have captured every ship and everything you love, and now I will capture you!"

Then he threw open the hatch. And the moon saw everything it loved streaming out of the pirate's ship and onto the pirate's island. Kitchen curtains and long candles and violins playing sad music and moody poets and lonely wolves and dancers who danced in the middle of the night. It gave a little sigh and came closer to the island, and the pirate watched. Still the moon drew closer, and the pirate saw it grow.

"I didn't know the moon was quite so big," he thought. And still the moon came down, the moon came down, closer, still closer. And the pirate started to feel afraid. He tore through the book that told all about the moon, but he couldn't find a place that told how big the moon was. And the moon came down, growing larger, larger than the pirate's ship, larger than his island, larger than anything the pirate had ever seen.

The pirate trembled, and he thought, "If I return everything I've captured, that will surely stop the moon." So he cut the saddles and the bits from the wild horses and the chain from the flowers, and they drifted out to sea. And a shadow passed across the giant moon; it was the birds streaming away.

And still the moon came down. So the pirate freed the madly playing violins and the howling wolves, the poets chanting

and the pools bursting from their barrels, and he sent them sailing home.

Moonlight spread over the waves, it covered his empty island. The pirate lifted his trembling sword as the whole sky became the moon....

And then the moon stopped. And waited.

The pirate stared into its light, and a wild shiver ran through him like a wave. He forgot about being afraid. He forgot about being fierce. He lowered his sword, he dropped his armor, and he whispered, "Moon, wonderful moon, it is you who have captured me."

And the moon glowed through him and above him. Then, slowly, it started back into the sky, growing smaller, growing distant, until once again it sailed as it pleased. It drifted over the sea and over the island where now there was someone new the moon loved, who loved the moon.

For at that moment, in the middle of the night, the pirate began to dance.

That dance is faith expressed as worship. It happened when the pirate who loved nothing realized he was loved by the moon.

And now you may be really frustrated, because you're thinking, "Dang it, Peter! The moon can't love people, especially pirates. And the moon never came down. And no one ever tried to capture the moon!"

Is that right? Did you remember that Jesus is the faithful witness? And the faithful witness is the moon?

Listen to Revelation 6:12:

When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood

Well, I'm not doubting that the rock we call the moon may one day turn red, but can you think of a day when the rock we call Jesus turned red?

At the sixth hour, on the sixth day, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth. And the faithful witness was drenched in blood as He cried out, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit"—seven spirits. Jesus said it was the judgment and He is the door . . . to the seventh day, the Sabbath Day of the Lord.

In Acts 2, Peter stood up on Pentecost and said, "These men are not drunk, as you suppose." I think they were *moonstruck*. For then Peter said:

But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel . . . the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the . . . great and magnificent day.

You see, the moon *did* come down. They wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. Just as John was out-carnated, Jesus was in-carnated . . . into our space and our time, our box, our manger, our little pirate ship.

He gave up His heavenly crown, and the only crown He ever wore in this world was made of thorns and pounded into His head with sticks.

The religious leaders so wanted to comprehend God and control God:

- They actually did murder God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- They nailed Him to the tree of knowledge, the tree of law.
- They captured Him, dissected Him, broke Him.

But as they broke and conquered His body, He conquered all things with His blood, His life, His love, the light of God's mercy.

Jesus (the Passover Lamb) was enthroned on a cross.

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 One on the throne is sovereign over all reality.

- He can handle your divorce, your cancer, your problems.
- He literally hung the moon for you.
- He literally crucified His heart to conquer your heart.

So cast your crown, your knowledge, your control, your self before Him.

In order to conquer, we must first be conquered by the Lamb. Then we conquer with Him—even if we die; *especially* if we die.

- Rev. 13:7: The beast is allowed to conquer the saints, but they don't stay dead.
- Rev. 17:4: The Lamb will conquer the beast, for He is "Lord of lords" and "King of kings," and those with Him are called "chosen and faithful."
- Rev. 12:11: We conquer by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony, loving not our lives even unto death.
- John 16:33: Jesus said, "In this world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have conquered the world."
- I John 5:4: Whatever is born of God conquers the world, and this is the victory that conquers the world: our faith.

The old pirate's dance is faith.

- You don't conquer with your own knowledge, strength, plans, and control.
- You conquer by surrendering control.
- You conquer by being conquered.
- You conquer by faith through grace. And that faith becomes a dance called worship.

So that's the first thing we ask of everyone who calls Lookout Mountain Community Church their church, that you would make a habit of coming to worship service every week in order to stare at the throne.

We do that through music, prayers, the sacrament, and the sermon. My goal in preaching is not to give you more knowledge. My goal is to help you see the throne . . . so you would cast your crowns before Him.

The twenty-four elders cast their crowns before the throne continuously. How do they get them back on? Well, God is the One who truly crowns us. "He crowns us with steadfast love and mercy," says the Psalmist in Psalm 103. And we cast our crowns before Him.

What a picture! John saw God crowning those elders and the elders casting the crowns at His feet. Crowning and casting, crowning and casting, crowning and casting . . . it must have looked like a dance. *It is!* The dance is heaven, the dance is love, and the dance is life.

It is twenty-four, old pirates dancing under the moon.

So on that darkest of all nights, the faithful witness took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given for you.” And in the same way after supper, He took the cup saying, “This is the new covenant in my blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you.”

Do you see the throne? Do you see the glory on the throne? Then do this: Reach up and take your crown. This crown is steel, barbwire, and cement: your knowledge and control. Does it feel heavy? Cast it at the Lord’s feet. But now another crown is prepared for you. It is steadfast love and mercy. Even cast this in thanksgiving. You didn’t earn it, and He’ll put it back on your head.

Now come to the table. Come to the table, cast your crowns before Him, and feel free to dance by the light of the moon.

[Communion]

The inside of the bulletin says:

We ask everyone who calls LMCC home to commit to regular corporate worship. Worship is to be our strategy for everything. It is to be our life.

When you come here, you’re going on a date with God. But you’re still married to Him after you go home. You come here to stare at the throne and dance a bit. But your whole life is to be that dance.

So if you’re a landscaper running a business, your business is to be a dance. If you’re a truck driver, your business is a dance. If you’re a pastor like me . . . my business is to do the dance. But it’s all the same dance. It’s worship.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: His seed shall endure forever, And his throne as the sun before Me; It shall be established forever like the **moon**, Even like the **faithful witness** in the sky. Selah

~ *Psalm 89:35-37 (NKJV)*

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the **faithful witness**, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood. . . .

~ *Revelation 1:4-5*

It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.

~ *Luke 23:44-46*

When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full **moon** became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.

~ *Revelation 6:12-13*

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the **moon** to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'"

~ *Acts 2:14-21*

And in the world a heart of darkness

A fire zone

Where poets speak their heart

Then bleed for it

Jara sang, his song a weapon

In the hands of love

You know his blood still cries

From the ground

It runs like a river runs to the sea

It runs like a river to the sea

I don't believe in painted roses

Or bleeding hearts

While bullets rape the night of the merciful

I'll see you again

When the stars fall from the sky

And the moon has turned red

Over One Tree Hill

~ U2, "One Tree Hill," *Joshua Tree*

And then the moon stopped. And waited. The pirate stared into its light and a wild shiver ran through him like a wave. He forgot about being afraid. He forgot about being fierce.

He lowered his sword, he dropped his armor and he whispered, "Moon, wonderful moon, it is you who have captured me."

And the moon glowed through him and above him.

Then slowly, it started back into the sky, growing smaller, growing distant, until once again it sailed as it pleased.

It drifted over the sea and over the island where now there was someone new the moon loved, who loved the moon.

For a that moment, in the middle of the night, the pirate began to dance.

~ Dennis Haseley,
The Pirate Who Tried to Capture the Moon

moonstruck: affected by or as if by the moon: as

a: mentally unbalanced

b: romantically sentimental

c: lost in fantasy or reverie

~ Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Ed.

The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

~ Revelation 3:21-22

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death."

~ Revelation 12:10-11

It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation. . . . They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.

~ Revelation 13:6-7; 17:14

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." At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. 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. From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, 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. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: 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, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" 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. They cast their **crowns** before the throne. . . .

~ Revelation 4:1-10a

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who **crowns** you with steadfast love and mercy. . . .

~ Psalm 103:1-4

Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers twisted together a **crown** of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe.

~ John 19:1-2

Concepts create idols . . . only wonder understands.

~ Gregory of Nyssa

The trivialization in John's world was taking place through the gossip of those whose aberrant teachings would soon be known as gnosticism. The essential nature of gossip is that it talks about people instead of to them. Gossip leaves out all that is unique and glorious in a person and reduces him or her to an anecdote or a cliché or a stereotype. The gossip is never in awe. The gossip is never in love.

The Gnostics gossiped about God. They claimed to know a lot about God (Gnostic means "one who knows"), but it was all about God. Gnostics did not pray. They did not worship. Gnostics talked a lot to each other and wrote endlessly about what they thought. God was reduced to an anecdote, or fantasized into a speculation. . . .

It is telling that our Bible concludes with Revelation, which is to say, with a call to worship. By the time we have come to this final entry in the library of 66 books, our minds are bursting with knowledge and our hearts burning with desire. With all that knowledge and all that desire there is a great danger that we will just run off and put it to good use—tell everybody what we know, enlist everyone in our cause: communicate, motivate.

~ Eugene Peterson,

Christianity Today, October 28, 1991

The twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. 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." 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. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. 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." 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. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. 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. 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, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." 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!" 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!" And

the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

~ *Revelation 4:10-5:14*

But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

~ *John 4:23*

The galaxies were like curtains around Him. His robe was composed of millions and millions of living stars. Everything in His presence was living—His throne, His crown, His scepter. I knew that I could dwell before Him forever and never cease to marvel; there was no higher purpose in the universe than to worship Him. Then the Father became intent on one thing. All of heaven seemed to stop and watch. He was beholding the cross. The Son's love for His Father which He continued to express through all of the pain and darkness then coming upon Him touched the Father so deeply that He began to quake. When He did, heaven and earth quaked. . . .

Then I was in a different place, beholding a worship service in a little church building. As sometimes happens in a prophetic experience, I just seemed to know everything about everyone in the battered little room. All were experiencing severe trials in their lives, but they were not even thinking of them here. They were not praying about their needs. They were all trying to compose songs of thanksgiving to the Lord. They were happy, and their joy was sincere. I saw heaven, and all of heaven was weeping. I then saw the Father again and knew why heaven was weeping. They were weeping because of the tears in the eyes of the Father. This little group of seemingly beaten down, struggling people had moved God so deeply that He wept. They were not tears of pain, but of joy. When I saw the love that He felt for these few worshipers, I could not contain my own tears. Nothing I had experienced gripped me more than this scene. Worshiping the Lord on earth was now more desirable to me than dwelling in all of the glory of heaven.

~ *Rick Joyner, The Call*

Pirates Who Try to Capture the Moon

Revelation 3:21-5:14

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