

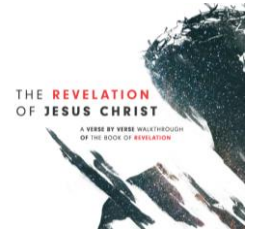
Title: Revelation, Part 13: The Majesty of Jesus

Speaker: Charles Stone

Passage: Rev. 5:1-14

Big idea: Four practical habits can help you keep Jesus central to your life rather than peripheral.

Memory verse of the month: Rev 7: 17 For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

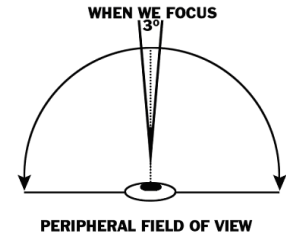


Think for a moment about your eyes and vision. I picked a neutral picture of eyes.



Sight is one of God's

From a simple perspective, vision includes two parts: central vision and peripheral vision. Our central vision is what we are currently focusing on at that moment. Right now I am focusing on the camera, although I somewhat see a fuzzy vision of walls in our recording studio. Although things lie in our peripheral vision, what matters the most to us at the moment is what we choose to place our central vision in, what we give our attention to.



Let's apply this idea of central vision (the primary focus of our attention) and peripheral vision (what is secondary to us in the moment), to a relationship with Jesus.

Spiritually, Jesus is either central to our lives or peripheral to our lives. I think every true believer wants Jesus and his desires and his plan for us to be central, rather than peripheral. But unfortunately, sometimes other things that compete with what should be central to our lives can intentionally or inadvertently push Jesus and the life he has for us to the periphery. We've probably all experienced that at some time in our lives when functionally following Jesus fell into the periphery, became secondary.

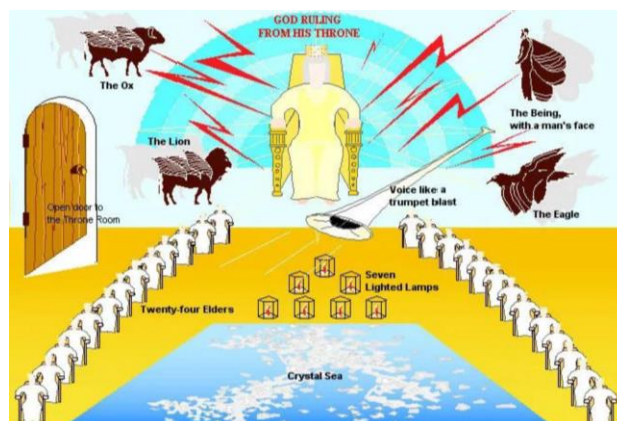
With that idea in mind, today we continue our series on the book of Revelation and we're going to see from an amazing vision the Apostle John had of the majesty of Jesus how we can more consistently keep Jesus central to our lives rather than peripheral. And I don't mean seeing a picture of Jesus in our mind, but that our goals, attitudes and actions, and relationships are framed by and directed by Jesus because we have made him and his desires for us central.

So, here's today's big idea.

Big Idea: Four practical habits can help you keep Jesus central to your life rather than peripheral.

The vision in today's passage occurs right after John's fabulous vision of heaven's throne room that I showed you last week. It included these images...

- Door
- Trumpet
- Throne
- rainbow
- 24 other thrones
- Lightning
- Lamps
- Sea
- Lion
- Ox
- the being with man's face
- flying eagle



This vision continues for a few chapters.

The passage today is [Rev 5. 1-14](#). You can follow along as I read or you get your own bibles and follow along.

Last week in chapter 4 we saw that John's vision elevated the majesty of God the Father. In this chapter the vision elevates the majesty of God the Son, Jesus.

Rev. 5:1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" ³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴ I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

⁹ And they sang a new song:

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. ¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they sang:

*"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!"*

¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

*"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"*

¹⁴ The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Wow, that is some vision, huh.

Before I unpack this vision, this is a good question to ask.

[Why did God reveal these truths in Revelation through these unusual images and pictures?](#)

[1. To keep the meaning hidden to the oppressors:](#)

It was only natural that these apocalyptic visions should flame the more brightly in the minds of people living under tyranny and oppression. The more some [government] power held them down, the more they dreamed of the destruction of that power and of their own recognition and restoration. But it would only have worsened the situation if the oppressing power could have understood these dreams. Such writings would have seemed the works of rebellious revolutionaries. These books, therefore, [specifically Rev] were frequently written in code, deliberately couched in language which was unintelligible to the outsider;¹

¹ Barclay, W. (2004). [The Revelation of John](#) (3rd ed. fully rev. and updated, Vol. 1, pp. 4–5). Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press.

Think about WWII a moment. It was won partially because of something called the Navajo code that the allies used to communicate to each other. In 1942, 29 Navajo men joined the U.S. Marines and developed the **code** that would be used across the Pacific during **World War II** Germany could not decipher it. These Navajo **Code** Talkers created an unbreakable **code**.

2. To deepen the faith of believers and further harden the hearts of the oppressors.

Jesus used parables this way. He used them to keep the spiritual attention of his believing listeners who otherwise might have missed his teaching and for the unbelievers, they further confirmed their hardened hearts since they did not understand them, though Jesus' teaching and Revelation also shocked some unbelievers into faith as they heard these stories and heard these visions read.

3. To illustrate similar events in different ways:

This point refers to the sequence of the events in Revelation. John recorded these images and events in the order that he received them in this dream but that does not necessarily imply that they occurred or will occur in that same order. Many good biblical scholars believe that the actual sequence of events as outlined in Revelation is not linear, but rather parallel visions in which God expresses the same truths in different ways.

Let's unpack the passage.

Rev. 5:1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.

There is a scroll with important truth about the future and how the end of history turns out, what becomes of followers of Jesus and rejectors of Jesus in the end times. Nobody has the authority to open and read the scroll, but one, Jesus. He has the authority and power to open and read this important scroll. And that one person is worthy of the adoration and praise of everything and everybody in the universe.

Scrolls were made of strips of dried **papyrus** plants that were glued together to make one of the writing materials in those days. The texture would be like brown paper bag. They could be as long as 10 meters. Revelation would probably be about 5 meters long based on how many columns and words they used per page. Usually they were only written on one side. This one had writing on both sides which meant there was a lot of material there.

The scroll was probably like a will and testament that contained God's redemptive plan that explains how God will bring history to a close, bring promised blessings to his followers, and judgment on those who rejected him, explaining how things are going to turn out, which Revelation does.

And it was sealed with **7 seals**.

The seals were meant to hide what was in the scroll until they were broken. The rest of Revelation reveals the content of this scroll as the mystery of God unfolds as we approach the end of all history.

Biblical Scholar Randolph Richards helps us understand this. In the Roman Empire, wills (as in a Last Will and Testament) were officially registered and filed at the government office. This was too expensive and official for most people. There was another method (Gaius 2.147). A person invited the heir, the executor and (usually) five witnesses to attend. He dictated his will to a secretary. When the document was finished, it was rolled up. Each person attested that it was correct and official by wrapping a string around it, tying it, putting a drop of wax on his knot and then pressing his seal into the wax. Thus the will would have seven seals.²

When it was time to make the inheritance official, the heir and the executor had to be there and a majority of the witnesses who would attest to their seal.

² <https://randolphrichards.com/2016/07/21/a-scroll-with-seven-seals/>

This image implies that each seal, when broken, would allow the scroll to be unrolled to a point and the contents seen until the next seal was broken and more of the scroll could be seen and so on.

² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?”

This *mighty* angel shouts out a challenge for anyone who is worthy to come and open the seals.

³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.

It was as if silence came over heaven. A great celestial pause. Would someone step forward.

No takers because someone worthy enough to open this important document would have to have the rank and character and moral qualities to approach the throne of God, for God is holding this scroll. It would require someone beyond a created being

The point is that no one was worthy, had the credentials, past, present, future, from any location anywhere: not a prophet of old, not a saint on earth, not a Einstein like genius, not some great world leader, not a godly person from the past, not even an angel.

This affected John. Remember John had been promised in this dream that he would see the future and how things turned out. But now with no one to open up this scroll that revealed the future, would he not see what is yet to come as he had been promised? Or even worse, would God’s purposes not be worked out? Will evil not be brought to an end? Would there be no protection for believers in the end times? No judgment upon a persecuting world? No ultimate triumph for believers? No new heaven and earth? No future inheritance.

This is what happened.

⁴ I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.

He was broken hearted. Had God’s plan been put on hold because there was no one to take this scroll as an agent of God to unfold the end times, the final judgement, and restoration of a new heaven and a new earth?

⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”

One of these elders that represents the church encourages John that there is one able.

He uses the past tense in describing the triumph of this person who is Jesus. The triumph over death and hell has already occurred when Jesus died and rose from the dead. All the final events leading up to the ultimate banishment of evil and satan is what Revelation explains.

Jesus is the Heir and the Executor of the will. More than that, he is all five witnesses (remember how wills with multiple seals required that a majority had to be present for the will to be read).

We see two names of Jesus. A lion is one of them. A lion is an emblem of Jesus’ kingly authority and power.

The root of David connects Jesus directly with David who was the great king of Israel. Jesus was of David’s lineage.

These titles of Jesus show us that Jesus has triumphed over evil by the major weapon, the cross, and because of that he can open this scroll. Revelation really describes Jesus’ mopping up operation after the victory was initially won on the cross.

But then the image of Jesus changes.

6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain,

This use of the word lamb is so prominent in Revelation that the word appears 29 times in the book and only once in the rest of the NT. It means a gentle, humble lamb.

In the OT sacrifice, the lamb was the typical sacrificial victim.

As though slain means that he bore the marks of death but is very much alive now. Jesus triumphed over death and is at the center of heaven's adoration.

Not only is Jesus seen as the lion, one with all power, but an innocent, perfect lamb who by his sacrifice has paid for all the sins of the world.

So sometimes we see in popular literature the image of the **lion and lamb together**.

In this image the lamb was also described in this way.

He had seven horns and seven eyes,

Horns symbolize Jesus strength and eyes symbolize his all-pervading intelligence. Jesus who bears the marks of death yet also bears the signs of divine omnipotence and divine omniscience.

7 He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. 8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb.

Jesus hasn't yet opened the seals, but they anticipate its opening so they burst into praise.

The lamb, Jesus, did not bow down in worship of God the Father which reminds us that Jesus is as much God as God the father is.

And to reinforce the truth that Jesus is fully God, worship to any other thing or being other than God would be idolatry. Here Jesus is worshipped because He is fully God.

Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Harpes were often used in worship in the OT. And the Jewish person understood this "golden bowls of incense" image. In early Judaism, before they had the temple, they had a portable temple called the **Tabernacle**.

In these visions, John uses some of the illusions to what was in the tabernacle.

This is one of them. An altar was placed right in front of this curtain that separated the rest of the tabernacle from the most holy place where God was seen to dwell.

And on top of this altar, called the **altar of incense**, were these golden bowls that were filled with incense and used in their worship and seen here as representing our prayers.

9 And they sang a new song:

Three different times the vision is about singing. This is the first one. There is a lot of singing going on here. This is the basis for this first song.

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals,

"You are worthy" refers to the qualifications of this person, Jesus, who alone has won the right to take the scroll and open its seals. His worthiness for this task is because of this.

because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

This right was won by his loving sacrifice on the cross. This universally offered redemption to anyone who repents and places their faith in Jesus occurs 7 times in Rev.

Then a bunch of angels, too many to count, sang another song about how worthy Jesus was.

John is probably thinking, wow, this is as good as it gets. But no, the choir expands to include all of creation, a third time they sang. All creation gathers around with anticipation awaiting the disclosure of this great mystery in this scroll and they sing.

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!”

An amazing vision about the majesty and centrality of Jesus. So the question for us is how do we keep Jesus central?

Let's go back to our big idea.

Big Idea: Four practical habits can help you keep Jesus central to your life rather than peripheral.

I'm going to show you four images that represent these four habits, and see if you can come up with what each means.

Habit 1: Persist in prayer: because prayer pleases God. And he hears our petitions (bowls).



Remember the golden bowls filled with incense - the image is that God cherishes our prayers, he stores them up, they are pleasing to him as incense was seen as pleasing to him in the OT worship.

These prayers include the prayers of the martyrs reminding us that God will render justice, that he will vindicate those who have been persecuted because of their faith in Jesus. It also includes our prayers that God considers so precious,

King David wrote....

Ps 141:2 May my prayer be set before you like incense;

When we pray it brings Jesus back onto center stage, back into our central vision.

Habit 2: Serve selflessly: God created us to serve him.



¹⁰You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”

In the OT only priests could approach God, go into the places in the temple that were most holy. If you were an ordinary person, you could only go so far. Now, because of Jesus' work, we can. In a sense we are all priests in that we have direct access to God. And priests served God in the temple.

Eph 2.10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

One of the big unknowns we will face in a post-covid world is how many former church goers who served faithfully pre-covid will quit serving in or outside the church. Will some quit because they are out of habit, or because they've filled up their schedule with other activities, or because they just don't see the importance of serving.

If you are a follower of Jesus, he expects you to serve him out of gratefulness for what he has done. I hope you won't be one of those drop outs. But that when you are ready, you again serve Christ and His Church.

So, when you serve, you put Jesus front and center, in your central vision.

Habit 3: Make music in your heart. Put a song in your heart.



As these elders and heavenly creatures and angels and all the other created beings beheld Jesus they worshipped and in this vision, they sang. You may be a really bad singer, but when you have a song in your heart about Jesus it will lift up your soul. Listen to uplifting music. Make up songs of praise. Sing the scripture. Sing when we come together. Email Corey Brown, our worship leader, for some ideas.

Note the common experience in all three times singing happened, it was corporate.

In all three times when a new phase of worship happened there was a corporate sense, not a solo, loner sense. Yes, we do worship Jesus on a day by day basis when no one is around. But, the example here is doing it with others. That's when we come together. .

The psalmist prophetically writes about this new song.

- Psa. 96:1** *Sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.*
- ² *Sing to the LORD, praise his name;
proclaim his salvation day after day.*
- ³ *Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among all peoples.*

So, when you make music in your heart about Jesus, you put Jesus front and center, in your central vision.

This next one I added because of the current cultural climate in North America.

Habit 4: Reject racism.



John wrote of this universal offer of redemption to everyone who believes when he wrote. **with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.**

Racism and Christianity are antithetical.

In biblical days racial prejudice was very prevalent (Jews and Greeks and Christians and Samaritans and rich and the poor often were not so friendly toward each other). It seems that racism is rearing its ugly head today. Yet, God affirms diverse people groups with different languages and tongues and ethnicities. We see His creativity in the uniqueness' of different people groups and races.

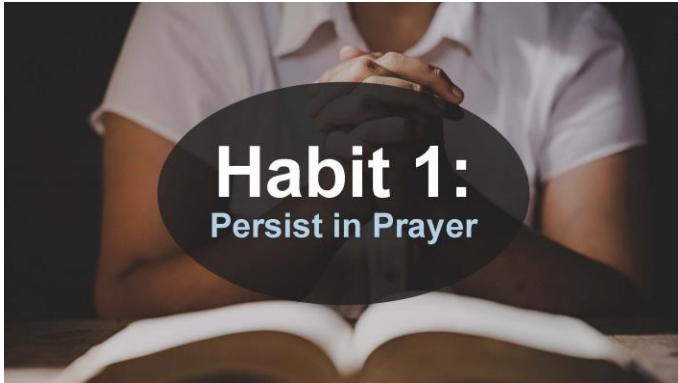
That's one of the beautiful things about WP: we are so ethnically diverse, 4 different language congregations, over 50 different nations represented in our church, yet unified in Christ.

Redemption is universally offered. God has made this universal offer of grace because of Jesus' death and resurrection, to every person, no matter their skin color, language, ethnicity, or race. In Christ, believers are one in Him, and at the same time we recognize, respect, and honor each of our unique and different God designed qualities.

John records this universally offered redemption 7 times in Rev.

So, to keep Jesus at the forefront, when you see somebody not like you this week, with different skin color, a different language, a different demographic group, it ties in to habit 1, persist in prayer. In your heart, pray for that person, that God would shield them from hateful people and that he would them to himself.

Let's review each image:



This week, take these images that represent a habit and keep them in your mind and heart and practice them.

Last week I ended my message with our singing this powerful song called **The Revelation Song** which takes some of the words from chapter 4 and chapter 5 to create the lyrics. Let's worship Jesus from our heart as we sing His new song.