**The Alpha and Omega**

Revelation 1:8; 21:6; 22:13

Rev. Brian Bill

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Over twenty years ago when I pastored in Rockford, Beth and I were in a small group and will never forget when one of the guys shared what happened when he got another dog for his family. Things were not going so well because the new dog acted like the Alpha canine over everyone in the house. He would growl at the other dog, not let him up the stairs or sleep on the bed. He terrorized the whole family. The husband decided to go to a dog psychologist, also known as an animal behaviorist, who gave him a list of things to do to break the animal down so he would no longer think of himself as the top dog.

Feeling confident that the dog’s reign as Alpha was about to end, my buddy paraded around the house on all fours growling with a bone in his mouth. He would crawl up the stairs with a dog toy, turn around and start barking. The rest of us in the group were howling with laughter as he told the story. After the first day of doing all these drills and being very tenacious with the training, my friend sat down for dinner. In a matter of moments he felt a warm sensation on his leg. He looked down and quickly realized that Chester was relieving himself. Our friend quickly called Dr. Dog Psychologist and told him that he had followed every instruction he was given and what his darling dog had done to him. The trainer laughed loudly and said that the dog was simply telling him what he thought of the session.

Have you settled who the Alpha is in your life? Today we’re going to pick up one more metaphor of the Messiah that is found not in the Gospel of John but in the Book of Revelation where Jesus declared three times that He is the ***“Alpha and the Omega.”***

We have been going through the “I am” statements of Jesus from the Gospel of John in preparation for Easter. We’ve learned that Jesus is the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Door, the Good Shepherd, the Way, and the Vine. Next weekend for our 5 Comeback Easter services, we’ll be pondering what Jesus meant when He said, ***“I am the Resurrection and the Life.”***

The Book of Revelation is filled with twists and turns but the main character is the glorious and majestic Jesus Christ, the conquering King. I like John MacArthur’s insight: *“There is absolutely no book like it.  It is loaded with drama…with suspense…with mystery, passion, horror, [and] disaster.  It tells…of the coming story of the apostasy of the church…the collapse of world economics…the final war of the world… unparalleled natural disasters.  It tells of the final judgments of the wrath of God.  It speaks of bloodbaths, political conflict that opens the way for a wicked, hellish, world ruler to take over.  It speaks of the total destruction of the entire universe and the damnation of both the bodies and souls of people to eternal hell. It is a book of unbelievable excitement, and yet amazingly it is a book of hope, and a book of joy, and a book with a happy ending.”*

The Apostle John has been exiled to the rocky island of Patmos. It makes me think of Alcatraz. His fellow disciples have been martyred. Christians are being persecuted and in the midst of all the bad news, he is given an unforgettable vision of Jesus Christ.

By the way, we’re told that blessing comes when we read and heed this book according to verse 3: ***“Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.”***

Turn to Revelation 1:7-8 where we get a sneak peak of what is going to happen: ***“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’”***

**His Second Coming**

Look at the beginning of verse 7: ***“Behold…”*** This means that we’re to pay attention and to look expectantly. It literally reads, *“Lo and behold!”* This is good for us because we get so caught up in what’s happening in the here and now. What is it that we’re to pay attention to? The fact that ***“He is coming…”*** Notice that this is in the present tense, meaning that Jesus is on the way. It’s not that He shall come or might come but that right now He is in the process of coming. The *“Coming One”*was a name for the Messiah as evidenced in John the Baptist’s question in Matthew 11:3: ***“Are you the one who is to come or shall we look for another.”***

The verb *“coming”* is used of Jesus Christ nine times in the Book of Revelation. Did you know that one out of every 25 New Testament verses directly refers to the second coming of Christ and for every time the first coming is mentioned in the Bible, the second coming is mentioned 8 times? Over 50 times in the New Testament we are told to be ready for His return. In Revelation 22:12 Jesus declares, ***“Behold, I am coming soon…”***

Observe that His coming will be ***“with the clouds.”*** Don’t think of white and wispy clouds but rather of God’s shekinah glory on full display. In Acts 1:9 we read that after the resurrection Jesus ascended into heaven and ***“a cloud took him out of sight.”*** Verse 11 tells us that He will descend in the same way that He ascended. And, while the first coming of Jesus was veiled, His second coming will be visible to the whole world: ***“every eye will see Him.”***

And then we read of two groups of people who will be petrified at His appearing:

* **The Jews who pierced Him.**
* **All tribes of the earth.**

Both unbelieving groups, made up of Jews and Gentiles, will ***“wail on account of Him.”*** This word means, *“to cut”* and was used when someone was in deep despair. Verse 7 ends with the words, ***“Even so. Amen.”*** John is saying, *“Do it. Make it happen.”* Interestingly, he uses a Greek and a Hebrew word that both mean *“yes.”* He does the same in 22:20 at the end of the book: ***“Amen”*** (Hebrew). ***“Come, Lord Jesus.”*** (Maranatha, Greek).

Verse 7 describes the second coming of Jesus and verse 8 gives us the certainty of it. How do we know for sure that it will happen?

In our me-centered society and churches filled with shallow spirituality, we don’t stop often enough and reflect deeply enough on who Jesus Christ is. He wasn’t just a good man or a great teacher, or a miracle-worker or a prophet. He was, and is, so much more! We see three attributes of Jesus in Revelation 1:8.

**The Certainty of His Coming**

**1. Jesus is Omniscient – All-Knowing.** Look at the self-descriptive phrase at the beginning of verse 8: ***“‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God.”*** Remember, when Jesus uses the verb, ***“I am,”*** He is equating Himself with Yahweh, first disclosed to Moses in the burning bush back in Exodus 3. Let’s drill down into the phrase, ***“Alpha and Omega.”*** I wrote down 10 truths.

1. These are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. An alphabet for a language contains and conveys all ideas and knowledge. Jesus sees and knows all.
2. When someone used this expression, they were also including everything in between. It would be like us saying, *“from A to Z.”* Colossians 1:17: ***“And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”***
3. The name *Alpha* means first in rank and also signifies the best. He is “A1,” meaning there is nothing higher or better.
4. The name *Omega* reminds us that Jesus was made last in his condescension when He became a man and died on a cruel cross as a common criminal.
5. Jesus is the *Alpha* of salvation according to John 3:16 and the *Omega*, or ending, of the sacrificial system when he stated in John 19:30: ***“It is finished.”***
6. Greeks often used symbolic letters to describe their deities. By describing Himself as the Alpha and Omega, Jesus is claiming superiority over any so-called god.
7. Jesus is declaring Himself to be God by using this phrase. Isaiah 41:4 says, ***“Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am he.”***
8. This shows that Jesus is bigger than time. He’s the beginning and the end. Jesus is the *“end-all and be-all.”* What He started in Genesis, He finishes in Revelation.
9. This phrase was used to communicate that something was complete. Jesus is the initiator and the one who finishes, the cause and the completer, the foremost and the utmost. Hebrews 12:2: ***“looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith…”*** What He begins, He completes. Psalm 138:8: ***“The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me”*** and Philippians 1:6: ***“that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion…”***
10. In every alphabet there’s something that corresponds to an ‘A’ and a ‘Z,’ showing how every culture is included in God’s plan of redemption.

The shortest alphabet in the world is the Rotokas alphabet from Papua New Guinea, containing only 12 letters and the language with the most letters is Khmer from Cambodia with 74. Jesus is the beginning letter and the ending letter, and everything in between in every language, tribe and tongue…and alphabet.

Did you know there are over one million words in the English language and they all come from arranging the 26 letters of our alphabet? Some of you *Scrabble* experts and *Crossword* enthusiasts are all about words. New words keep getting added each year like *facepalm* and *fleek* and *photobomb* and *adorkable* but no new letters are ever added.

There are few doctrines that are so explicitly taught in Scripture as that of God’s omniscience. Let’s consider just a few:

1 Samuel 2:3: “…the Lord is a God who knows…”

1 John 3:20: “God…knows everything.”

Psalm 147:5: “Great is our Lord…His understanding has no limit.”

2. Jesus is Omnipresent – He is everywhere. Jesus knows everything and next we see that He is everywhere present at the same time: “Who is and who was and who is to come…” He is, right now in the present. He came in the past at His first coming and He is coming again! He is past, present and future. He has come, He is coming and He will come! Revelation 4:8: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” Revelation 11:17: “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.”

The truth of God’s omnipresence can be soothing or unsettling. To some, it brings comfort. Others find it very convicting. The fact that God is everywhere present at the same time can be a disturbing doctrine.

* **Omnipresence Brings Conviction.**  Like Jonah, is God calling you to do something right now that you want nothing to do with? Don’t wait until God sends a storm into your life, or you end up with a whale of a problem. Are you involved in something that you’re trying to keep secret? Listen. There is no way you can avoid the presence of God. Jeremiah 23:24 says: ***“Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him? Do I not fill heaven and earth?” declares the Lord.”***

The reason Christ convicts is so that He can get our attention. He loves us too much to let us keep running or hiding from Him.

* **Omnipresence Brings Comfort.** God’s presence also brings comfort. Isaiah 41:10: ***“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”*** Because God is always with us, we do not have to be dismayed.

I’m thankful that God is an ever-present help in trouble today, and I’m also glad that He has the future covered.  Jesus is, He was, and He is to come. In an article called, “The God of My Future Problems,” the author defines God’s “prevenient grace” as the grace that goes before.  In every situation of life God is already at work before I get there.  He is working creatively, strategically and redemptively for my good and His glory in order to accomplish His purposes.

While I am struggling with the problems of today, Jesus is at work providing solutions for the things I’m going to face tomorrow.  He’s working in situations right now that I haven’t even faced yet.  He’s preparing them for me and me for them.  Or to say it another way: *“While I’m living in Saturday, He’s already in Monday.”*  Are you worried about next week?  Chill out.  He’s already there.  How about next year?  Don’t sweat it.  He’s got it covered.  Since Jesus is already in the future, you can trust Him today and put your hope in Him for tomorrow, even if trials come your way (and they will).

It would be enough if Jesus simply walked with you through the events of life.  But He does much more than that.  He goes ahead of you, clearing the way, arranging the details of life, so that when you get there, you can have confidence that God has already been there before you.

Jesus is Omniscient – He is the Alpha and the Omega.

Jesus is Omnipresent – He is, He was and He is to come.

3. He is Omnipotent – He is All-Powerful. We see this in the last phrase of verse 8: “…the Almighty.” Jesus is totally sovereign and in complete control. In Revelation 19:6, the Apostle John heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and loud peals of thunder shouting out. Listen to the KJV: “For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” Handel composed his majestic Hallelujah Chorus around this verse.

The word omnipotent is derived from Latin and refers to God’s power as infinite and unlimited. It’s defined by the biblical word, “Almighty,” which occurs 345 times in the Bible. He alone is Almighty as Psalm 89:8 says, “O Lord God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O Lord, and your faithfulness surrounds you.”

He can do with power anything that power can do because He has the strength to do all He wills to do. He has all the resources and the ability to work His will in every circumstance in the universe. I like how A.W. Tozer puts it: “God possesses what no creature can: an incomprehensible plenitude of power, a potency that is absolute.”

In the divisive political season that we’re in as a country, it’s good to remember that Jesus Christ is Almighty. I read a post this week by Scott Sauls that I found quite helpful: *“When it comes to politics, the Bible gives us no reason to believe Jesus would side completely with one political viewpoint over another. Rather, when it comes to kings and kingdoms, Jesus sides with Himself…The question we should be asking, then, isn’t whether Jesus is on our side, but whether we’re on His. This is the appropriate question not only for politics and government, but also every other concern.”*

**Application**

Did you know that the type most newspapers use for astounding events is called, “Second Coming” type? Using large, heavy, black letters this font is reserved for stupendous front-page news like the assassination of JFK, the shooting of Ronald Reagan and to announce the surrenders of Germany and Japan.

Here’s a news flash. You are not Alpha. You are not the beginning or the best. And you are not Omega. You are not the end all. Since Jesus is coming, we must surrender.

When John caught a glimpse of Christ, he hit the ground. There is no question who the Alpha and the Omega is, is there? We can try to fight Him, which won’t work because we’ll lose, or we can submit and surrender to Him right now. Every knee will eventually bow to Him. Why not do it now willingly instead of doing it later when it will be too late? Check out Revelation 1:17-18: ***“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died*** [crucifixion]***, and behold I am alive forevermore*** [resurrection]***, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.’”***

Since Jesus is coming back, what should we do? Greg Laurie writes, *“We should live every day as though it were the day that Christ would come.”*

**1. Purify yourself today.** 1 John 2:28: ***“And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.”*** Make Jesus your *everything* because He is Alpha. And make Him your *end and your aim* because He is Omega.

**2. Proclaim the gospel every day.** When Jesus starting talking about His return His followers wanted to know all about dates and timelines. Its interesting that instead of giving them that, He said these words in Acts 1:8: ***“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”***

During our Easter services, we’ll be highlighting several Comeback Stories. Here’s a preview from Chad Jett: *The biggest comeback for Chad is that Jesus Christ saved him from his sins and freed him from an addiction to drugs and alcohol. As a result, his relationship with his wife Tyne has been restored. He’s also experienced an attitude change and has become less angry: “I still have bad days but not as much as I used to.” Chad was invited to Celebrate Recovery and became a follower of Jesus through this Christ-centered recovery ministry. He loves helping others experience the comeback that only Christ can provide.*

Here’s another comeback story from Cory McAnally, son of Dave and Ruth and brother of Amy Miller. Cory has Downs Syndrome. Here’s how he answered the question, *“What does Jesus mean to you?”* *“I love him. He’s you're my buddy. We will pray to him. Then I am going to heaven…not hell. They killed him. Now He is in heaven. He is alive [over] the power darkness. Pastor Ed teaches me around Jesus. And Bob Newhart* [that’s what he calls me] *Happy Birthday Hoo Hoo. Before the Rockstar Pastor Chad Doran. We will I see you church. Take Care. Before Easter Sunday.”*

In His first coming, Jesus came with humility to deal with sin. At His second coming, He will come in power to deal with sinners. On Palm Sunday He came into Jerusalem on a humble colt. He will come again in victory on a white horse.

We’ve had some dog training issues ourselves, having to send our previous dog Charlie to prison several years ago (the inmates trained him)…now he sits, stays and lays down on command. How about you? Have you settled the Alpha issue?

The phrase ***“Alpha and Omega”*** is used two more times at the end of the Book of Revelation. One passage has to do with mercy and the other with judgment.

**1. MERCY.** Revelation 21:5-6: ***“And he who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ Also he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’ And he said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.’”***

* Jesus makes all things new
* It is done – all is finished
* Must drink the water of life

**2. JUDGMENT.** Revelation 22:12-13: ***“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”***

* Jesus is coming soon
* He will bring recompense, retribution and repayment for those who have not repented

What will it be for you? Will you acknowledge Him as your Alpha and Omega so you receive mercy instead of judgment?

Purify yourself today and then proclaim Christ every day. Let’s pray right now for our five Easter services.

**Closing Song:** “God You Reign”

**New Members**

Tyler and Kodi Kargl and Lexi Kargl

John and Sabrina Blackburn