

THE FIRST AND THE LAST

June 5, 2016

Revelation 22:1-21

“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.”

Revelation 22:12, 13

We continue considering writings of the Apostle John in which Jesus used the title “I am.” Whereas these studies have focused upon the Gospel of John, we look today at the book of Revelation, also written by the Apostle John, to consider Christ’s “I am” statements made after He ascended into heaven.

Four times the statement “I am Alpha and Omega” is repeated. First is in connection with Christ’s redeeming work and His promised return, and it is joined with the declaration “the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8). Next, Jesus proclaimed with a “great voice” that He is Alpha and Omega when He commanded John to write to the seven churches in Asia Minor (1:11). Third, the promise regarding glories God’s people will enjoy in eternity is guaranteed with the statement, “I am the Alpha and Omega” (21:6). And His promised return with rewards for His people is again confirmed with “I am Alpha and Omega” (22:13).

Our text repeats this title and expounds its meaning with two additional statements: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last” (22:13).

Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Letters of the alphabet are the fundamental building blocks of all language. “Alpha and omega” encompass the whole alphabet, and thus the whole body of language, knowledge and truth. Christ is the embodiment of all truth.

Scripture describes Him as “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14), “the way, the truth, and the life” (14:6), the “true vine” (15:1) and “a man that hath told you the truth” (8:40, 45, 46). In Him “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3), for He is the “Word” that was in the beginning with God, and was God (John 1:1). “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (I John 5:20). Jesus Christ is the source of all truth. Moreover, in every matter of truth and knowledge, He has the first and the last word. He is sovereign over truth.

The title “Alpha and Omega,” expounded by the phrase “the beginning and the end,” focuses upon Christ’s lordship over time. From the beginning to the end, and over everything within the realm of time, He is sovereign. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). Before the beginning of time, Christ was present with God. After the end of time, Christ will continue. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8).

“But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail” (Hebrews 1:8-12).

When “Alpha and Omega” is expounded with the phrase “the first and the last,” it suggests Christ sovereignty over persons. Among all creatures, He is preeminent. He is the one before whom “every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10, 11).

He “is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell” (Colossians 1:15-19).

Because Jesus Christ is the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last,” His people can rest in Him amid life’s greatest trials, knowing that He sovereignly rules in all things. It is notable that this divine identity is revealed in the book of Scripture that foretells the end of the world and judgment of all things.

Because He is “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last,” He is worthy of the worship and love of every person.

And, because He is “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last,” every knee must bow before Him, and every tongue confess that He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings forever.