

## The $\alpha$ and $\Omega$ of Your Faith

1. Who was – dead, now alive forevermore
2. Who is – standing in our midst with the sword of His mouth
3. Who is to come – holding the keys of death

In the name of the Lamb who was slain and has begun His reign, dear fellow partners in the tribulation, the kingdom, and the patience,

Throughout the ages the book of Revelation has been the object of much abuse. I once had someone try to convince me that the bride referenced in Revelation was God the Mother who has come in the flesh and is living in South Korea. Influential teachers have corrupted this great treasure with strange doctrines that have no support anywhere else in Scripture.

From now until Pentecost, we will be immersed in this great treasure. As we uncover signs and symbols, there remains only one source for proper interpretation: Scripture. The Spirit will not contradict Himself. Knowing it is the Holy Spirit who speaks, we look to Him to guide us into the truths He has prepared for our salvation. Therefore, we pray:

**Oh Holy Spirit, keep us from adding or taking away from the words of this Book.  
Give us to drink of the water of life freely. Amen.**

The Apostle John recorded this vision while exiled on the Island of Patmos. This was most likely during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian. This was a time of great persecution. So John writes, v.9, “your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience.”

What unveils before our eyes is a glimpse into heaven. We view the scene behind the scenes. This is our patience in tribulation. In outward things, it might seem like we are exiled, imprisoned by the curse of sin. Yet here we escape to another world – a world unseen by this world. Here you escape Patmos; because here is revealed the Alpha and Omega, the Lamb who was slain and now reigns forever.

As our verse of the day directs us – *Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.* (Romans 6:9, John 20:29b).

As we escape to this heavenly world that God gives through faith, we again pray:

**Oh Holy Spirit, give us ears to hear what You say. Amen.**

**Revelation 1:4–20 (NKJV)**

**Revelation 1:4-18**

INI

*4 John, to the seven churches which 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,*

*5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,*

*6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

*7 Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.*

*8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

*9 I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

*10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,*

*11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."*

*12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,*

*13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.*

*14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;*

*15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;*

*16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.*

*17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.*

*18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.*

*19 Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.*

*20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.*

This is the Word of the Lord.

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Our Lord, Jesus Christ is the beginning and end of all things. That is, from A to Z, He is the answer; He is your hope in every situation. Behold now: **Jesus, the Alpha and Omega of your**

**faith** ... Who was – dead, but is now alive forevermore; Who is – standing in our midst with the sword of His mouth; Who is to come – holding the keys of death.

## 1. Who was – dead, now alive forevermore

For weeks we had been considering this humbled human, this beaten body, this soul sorrowful unto death. Now stands before us an appearance quite different. He is girded with a golden band; His hair is white as snow; His feet are like purified brass; His voice roars throughout heaven; His face shines like the sun. Should we not tremble before Him? Should we not fall down, like John, as dead?

Why do we tremble? We tremble because of our own appearance. Our appearance is covered and colored by sin. We are covered with acts and thoughts of selfishness from the moment we walk out the door; we wonder first of all: “what am I going to get out of this day...” We are colored by the times we have not bowed before this One who shines like the sun. The darkness of those temptations and pressures; troubles at home that we ignore, bad influences at work that we do not. We know what is good and right, yet we fail to see it done – in our lives, in the world around us. We can handle the humbled Jesus who stands in silence before His accusers, who tells Peter to put His sword in its sheath. But now we see who this Jesus really is – the Beginning and End of all things; the Almighty.

*v.17,18 But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen.”*

The right hand is the hand of authority. This touch says: Do not be afraid. This right hand is the hand which shows the pierced holes of our salvation. With this hand, He rescues you from the torment of your sins; He grabs you from the clutches of fear and the death we deserve. This is the Alpha and Omega of your grace and peace.

John’s greeting, in verses 4 through 6, reveal our faith from A to Z.

Grace and peace are yours ...

From *the Witness* – In the Greek: “martyr.” ... His **humiliation** – This is the same Jesus who willingly offered His life as our ransom, as a witness to the truth. He was sent not to condemn the world, but to save it.

From *the Faithful One* ... His **obedience**. This is He who was perfect in all things pertaining to our salvation, earning righteousness for you.

From *the Firstborn from the dead* ... His **resurrection**. This is He who spoke so softly: “A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. (John 14:19)

From *the Ruler of the earth* ... His **ascension** to the right hand of God. This is He who lives and reigns for you, who will come again to raise you up to everlasting life.

From *Him who loved us and washed us* ... your **justification**. He has declared you eternally forgiven in His precious blood.

From *Him who has made us kings and priests to God* ... your **sanctification**. He has brought you into His kingdom through baptism. Your stand before His throne with His right hand of authority, to forgive sins, to offer the spiritual sacrifices of faith, to offer a pleasing service to God.

Truly He is the Alpha and Omega of our faith. He was dead, and is now alive forevermore.

## 2. Who is – standing in our midst with the sword of His mouth

The whole book of Revelation is meant to reveal One central figure: the Lamb who was slain, who now stands enthroned in glory and victory. And where does He stand, where does He receive praise and glory, who surrounds His throne?

*12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, ... 16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword*

You will notice the interpretation is right in the text. v.20 – “the seven stars are the angels of the churches,” or more literally – “the messengers of the seven churches,” and “the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”

The “seven churches” are indeed real churches to which John writes. Yet also they represent something bigger. “Seven” is symbolic of completeness. For instance, it was on the seventh day of creation that the Lord rested seeing it was “very good.” It is the fulness of the Holy Christian Church that surrounds the Son of Man. Our own congregation is a lampstand that illumined with the gospel. Jesus stands right here in our midst.

“Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.” Paul likewise, in Ephesians, describes the Word of God as the Sword of the Spirit. And from Hebrews: *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* (Hebrews 4:12)

Notice that paradoxical language: “I turned to see the voice...” As you gather here, you turn to “see the voice” of Him who speaks from heaven. His voice stands in our midst, for this is how He reveals Himself – in language, in words, in a message. He

wields His double edged sword. On the one hand, this makes us aware of our sins – the hidden ones and the blatant ones. He cuts to our heart so that no calloused obstructions inhibit the true reign of His kingdom. Only then, stripped bare, do you truly “see” Him. Only then does His labor on the cross become visible as that which paid for your every calloused sin. Only then does His resurrection over death reign is your sure hope of everlasting life. When you hear your sins forgiven for His sake, there you “see Him.” He stands in our midst, surrounding us with His voice. We bow before Him, surrounding Him with praises of love.

### **3. Who is to come – holding the keys of death**

We read earlier how Peter was locked in prison for wielding this sword. It says in Acts chapter 5 that the high priest and the Sadducees were filled with jealousy. So were they able to lock up the reign of Christ? No a chance. Prison bars stood no chance of hindering the goals of Christ’s kingdom; as we heard the angel instruct them – “go, speak to the people all the words of this Life.”

Yet He does not just holds in His hands the keys to release Peter. He holds the keys to release us from death itself.

***17 “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. 18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.***

Remember the purpose and focus of this Revelation. Make it personal. You know the personal ways that the tribulation rages on in your life. And it could very well become worse before it gets better ... There could very well come a time where you face your own Dominitian persecution ... where you are exiled for the Word of God. In fact, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that a time would come where you, or your children, or your grandchildren, face death for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

However, in the midst of all those fearful thoughts, this vision is your escape. Not that you escape physical persecution or spiritual tests, but that you escape the true defeat – you escape that which desires your soul; you escape death. By faith you reach the Omega – the end of the daily struggle, the end the daily sins, the end of your tribulation.

***7 Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.***

Unlike the tribes of the earth who mourn at this coming, we belong to a different tribe. The tribes of heaven rejoice at this sight. For He comes not to lock, but to release. This is the resurrected Jesus who says: “Peace to you!” ... who says: “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.” (John 20:26,27).

He is coming – to free your body from the grave, to restore new life to you; to give you the eternal resurrection where this same body will know no more pain, no more loss, no more sadness. Blessed are they who have not seen, yet believe. For you, for your children, for your grandchildren – this remains the Alpha and Omega of your faith.

Even if you should breath out your last breath on earth today, you know your next breath in will be in the new creation. May every breath, from beginning to end, breath the praises of Him has overcome every evil and keeps us by the power of His Word. Surround yourself with this vision. From the start of your day to the end of your day – Jesus Christ is your Alpha and Omega. Even so, Amen.