

Alpha & Omega

Revelation 1:8-12



*8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*

*9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

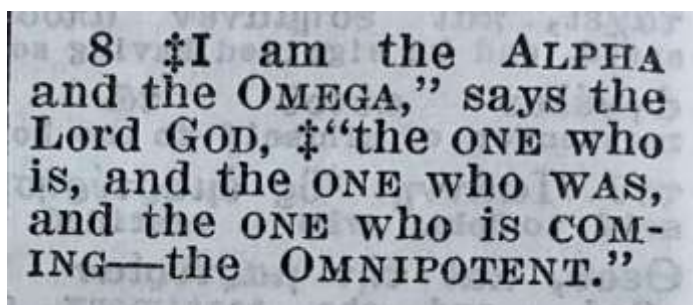
*10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,*

*11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*

*12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;*

As we commence this study we notice that verse 8 belongs to the immediate context the preceding verses which we studied in our last class. In this verse we have a description of the Son of God in glory, along with all the glorified saints, those who have been awarded eternal life. Jesus Christ, described as the Faithful Witness, the first begotten of the dead, the prince of the Kings of the earth. As part of the Apostles John's opening words he gives glory and honour to him, because through him is it possible to be washed from our sins in his

blood and to be made kings and priests. John sees him coming in clouds, not literal ones, but symbolic clouds, each water droplet representing a faithful witness drawn out, sanctified and separated from the world, to make a great cloud of witnesses, (Hebrews 12:1) John in vision sees this great Saviour surrounded with those who have been saved, being presented to his own nation even the Jews who pierced him, and crucified him, and they will wail and mourn realising their delusion and deception for centuries and because of their pride the lost opportunity for so many. This reminds of the passage in Zechariah 12:10... John is caused to utter *Even so Amen*, because back in the first century when he received this vision, the Jews were the enemies of Christ, how he longed for things to be different, and so it would be! as the plan and purpose of God would surely be fulfilled. So, this opening introduction is concluded in verse 8, where John records the words of Jesus Christ: *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*



The translation of the Original Greek New Testament text is here shown in what is called the Diatessaron. It can be seen that the words "the beginning

and the ending" are not in the original. It has also described the word Almighty as Omnipotent. The Lord Jesus rightly has the title Alpha and Omega, the first and last letters of the 24 letter Greek alphabet. In John 1: 2-3 we recall the words: *In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*

The Greek word for 'Word' is logos, which means concept, idea, plan, reason. Logos does not have a personality, is not male or female, so the verse should read...Vs 2 . *IT was in the beginning with God.* -Vs 3.

*All things were made through IT, and without IT nothing was made that was made*

When we read here in John 1:2 that all things were made by him (or it, as it should be) it is not saying that Jesus made everything, but that it was by the Word, the command of God that brought about the creative process. For example: Psalm 33:6,9 *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. For he spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.* Hebrews 11:3: *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.*

However, after Jesus was born, and developed into the remarkable man he is, he became the *Word made flesh* by living what the Word commanded, in other words he was *logos* manifest, the best example we can see of the *logos* of God. He was the living embodiment of the whole plan and purpose of God, so that it was a true saying when the Lord Jesus expounded scripture to those on the road to Emmaus recorded in Luke 24: 25-27 *beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.* How apt and fitting then for Jesus to describe himself as the Alpha and Omega, as he encompassed all that was written by the finger of God, and so has in turn become the author and finisher of our faith - see Hebrews 12:2.

In verse 9, John explains his involvement in the presentation of this wonderful book of the Revelation. He confirms that the book of Revelation was originally intended for Believers, those who have read and digested the rest of Scripture from beginning to end, and understand and believe the *logos* of God, as John describes himself to his readers as *your brother*. He is referring to the brotherhood of Jesus Christ, and entrance into that Divine family is by adoption through the waters of baptism. It is not possible to understand the language of the Revelation unless one is well grounded and adept at understanding the law, psalms and prophets.

John describes himself as well as being a companion or co partner in tribulation or affliction, and had been transported to the isle of Patmos on account of the Word of God. In other words, he had suffered persecution, because of what he had been preaching and been arrested and exiled on this remote island by the authorities at the time, perhaps they had been lenient with him because of his very advanced years, but the main reason being that God overruled events to ensure that the last testimony of Jesus might be preserved through such an one



The Roman authorities thought that such a remote island out of the way, there was no chance that the influence of this venerable old man and his teachings about this new religion called Christianity would have any effect. But like all that man does, he underestimates the power of God and mankind has never been able to hinder the purpose of God, or the testimony of Jesus Christ.

And so John begins to recount the first vision that his Lord and Saviour had revealed to him: verse 10: *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day...* The Lord's day does not refer to the sabbath, or the first day of the week, that some people might suggest. In fact the sabbath is never mentioned as being the Lord's day, and Jesus actually described the sabbath as being made for man see Mark 2:27. What

then is this day of the Lord that John was conveyed to in Spirit? Remembering that the book of Revelation is based upon the language of prophecy which the brothers and sisters of Jesus are meant to be familiar with, we can not go far wrong by referring to the prophets. The day of the Lord is a phrase that is referred to over and over again – particularly relating to being a day of anger and vengeance, of judgement and punishment of the nations. The day of the Lord is a phrase mentioned specifically in Isaiah 2:12, 13:6,9, Joel 2:31, 3:14, Zechariah 14:1 and Malachi 4:5. All referring to the final time of rescue of Israel, after their near annihilation, the punishment of the nations, and the beginning of the establishment of the Kingdom of God, when all nations will submit to Christ the King. This was the dream of John that he might one day be resurrected to stand in that day, and be part of the restoration of all things. Well, now in vision, he was being shown exactly that.

Whilst wondering as he was transported through time far into the future to witness the glory which would come, he heard behind him a voice as a trumpet! We could imagine ourselves in that position, it would make us jump and be surprised! We would turn around and see where the noise came from. That was exactly why the noise was made, to make John turn around. Instead of focussing on the judgment of nations, John was going to be shown – exactly who was going to be doing the judging! The sound of the trumpet is described as a voice, that is it was giving a message. Trumpets were frequently used in the Old Testament, and particularly with the camp of Israel, to direct them on their journeys and to sound the alarm. The Apostle Paul uses this symbol when describing the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 4:16: *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first...*

As John turned he heard the voice of the trumpet (verse 11): *Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in*

*Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*

It is not always easy writing down what we see. Of course, the Apostle John was being told what to write, he had also been given some of the gifts of the holy Spirit, as he relayed the words of Jesus. Nowadays we can record an event on our mobile phones and then send that recording to all the Ecclesias in Africa. But back then that technology did not exist. Instead, a better one called Divine Inspiration did exist, and a written testimony lasts a lot longer than videos! In fact, the reliability of the Scripture has been proven by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls from 1946, scrolls which dated back to previous to the birth of Christ. Parchments which included the oldest surviving manuscripts of entire books of the Bible, the same text with minimal changes as we have access to today.

Still, writing down what you see is not easy, and it is not easy for the person reading to get the exact picture the writer is intending to convey. That is why it is so important to understand where the writer is getting the ideas and the pictures



from. Being nearly always from the Old Testament, having advanced knowledge of the reference points of the moving visions that Jesus showed to John, will always help us to visualise these visions more accurately, and therefore understand them better.

John was commanded to send everything that he had seen to the seven ecclesias which are in Asia. In the days of the Roman empire at the time of John, Asia referred to what we call today the country of

Turkey. The seven Ecclesias referred to were the closest Ecclesias, the groups of believers located to John in Patmos, beginning at the nearest and moving around clockwise:



- Ephesus
- Smyrna
- Pergamos
- Thyatira
- Sardis
- Philadelphia
- Laodicea

Did this mean that there were no other Ecclesias left any more? Had all fallen away? It does not seem likely at that point, as we know that the Gospel had been spread much further abroad by then, by the Apostles. However, it was a time of much persecution during the reign of the emperor Domitian, so all Ecclesias were being tested during a time of great stress. Therefore, it is more likely that these seven Ecclesias were chosen as a representative of the Body as a whole, and that their individual circumstances would prove to provide lessons to generations of believers following.

That John was commanded to send his written and finished scrolls to all the seven Ecclesias means that in the mercy of God, he did have access to some who were sympathetic to his work, and would have been faithful messengers – or else we would not be reading this today.

John fully turned around whilst hearing this message, and there before him was a vision, and the source of the trumpet voice. He saw seven golden lampstands...

This vision will be the subject of next Revelation study God willing, and so we will end there.

Brother Terry