

Revelation 21:1-8

"God as Alpha and Omega"

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.' And He who sits on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' And He said, 'Write, for these words are faithful and true.' Then He said to me, 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.'"

As the Book of Revelation begins to close, readers encounter the New Jerusalem, the bride (Revelation 21:1-2). With the inauguration of the Eternal State, it is witnessed how "the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them" (Revelation 21:3, NRSV). Those who enter into this condition of dwelling or tabernacling with God, will be spared suffering (Revelation 21:4). There is no ambiguity how "God" here is a reference to the Father, who then prepares to issue dialogue (Revelation 21:5).

In Revelation 21:6, God declares, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will freely give from the spring of the water of life" (TLV). In the source text, the *egō eimi* formula derived from the Septuagint version of Exodus 3:14, the burning bush theophany, is notably encountered: *egō [eimi] to alpha kai to ò* (ἐγώ [εἶμι] τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ). The CJSB offers the rendering, "I am the Ἀ (*Alef*) and the Ὠ (*Tav*)."⁸⁹ (The preceding CJB actually has, "I am the 'A' and the 'Z'.") A range of commentators generally conclude that God declaring that He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, is to be taken as an affirmation of His supreme sovereignty:

- Leon Morris: "He is in command and in the end all things work out just as he wills. *I am the Alpha and the Omega* (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet) followed by *the Beginning and the End* (cf. 1:8; 22:13) reveals God as the Originator and Completer of all things."⁸⁹
- G.R. Beasley-Murray: "As **the Alpha and the Omega**, the Lord God Almighty is the initiator of creation and its end, and in his hands lies the whole intermediary process, which he guides to its desired conclusion (see note on 1:8). So truly as God is Alpha and Omega, so certain is his affirmation that he will make all things new."⁹⁰
- George Eldon Ladd: "He is **the beginning and the end**. The eternal one, who brought all things into existence, will make all things new in the eternal order."⁹¹
- G.K. Beale: "These divine titles are figures of speech (merisms) in which the figurative point is to mention the opposite poles of something in order to emphasize the totality of all that lies between. The use of the first and last letters of the alphabet was typical of the ancients in expressing merisms. So Jews could

⁸⁹ Morris, *Revelation*, 239.

⁹⁰ Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 312.

⁹¹ Ladd, 278.

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say that the law should be kept 'from *aleph* to *tau*.' That God is the beginning and the end of history means that he rules over all events in between."⁹²

- Grant R. Osborne: "The title is built on Isa. 44:6 and 48:12, 'I am the first and I am the last' (cf. 41:4), which meant that Yahweh was sovereign at the beginning of the nation and would be in charge at the end as well. In keeping with this title, God began history at creation and ends it at the eschaton. But the title means he controls not only the beginning and the end but also everything in between; in other words, he is sovereign over history. For the readers, this means that they can know God is in charge now because the Bible recorded his sovereignty over past history, and the prophecies in this book have demonstrated his control over future history. Therefore, they can be assured he is also sovereign in the present time of trouble."⁹³

God proper declaring "I am the Alpha and the Omega" in Revelation 21:6 is not an issue for those who hold to either a high or low Christology. In the immediate context, God as the Beginning and the End affects those who are either redeemed or condemned (Revelation 21:7-8). Further on in Revelation 22:13, however, Yeshua the Messiah Himself says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Would a supernatural, yet ultimately created being or entity, be permitted to speak such words? Aune addresses how the Messiah speaking this undoubtedly serves to indicate how the power and sovereignty of the Father and Son are interconnected:

"In 1:8a and 21:6 it is used of God, while in 22:13...it is used of Christ. In each context the title is not used alone but is juxtaposed with other titles, each of which emphasizes the absolute power and sovereignty of God (in 1:8 and 21:6) or of Christ (in 22:13), and each of which also serves to define and expand the others."⁹⁴

Revelation 21:22-23

"for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple"

"I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb."

Readers and examiners over the centuries have not fully agreed on what is represented by the "temple" here in Revelation 21:22-23. Some think that themes from Ezekiel 48, what this writer concludes to be the future Millennial Temple, are employed, and others take a more allegorical or metaphorical approach to what is described. Regardless of how the specific language is taken, regarding the future Eternal State, what is of high importance is how to approach *ho gar Kurios ho Theos ho pantokratōr naos autēs estin kai to arnion* (ὁ γὰρ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ ναὸς αὐτῆς ἐστὶν καὶ τὸ ἀρνίον), "for~the Lord God, the Almighty [the] temple of it is, and the lamb" (Revelation 21:22, Brown and Comfort).⁹⁵ It is not just God proper which composes this Temple in the Eternal State; this Temple is composed of both God and the Lamb. This surely bears some significance on what can be deduced about the nature of the Lamb, in relation to the Lord God.

Mounce offers the rather general observation, "The final state toward which this points is eternity itself, where the presence of God the Father and the Lamb permeates and sanctifies all

⁹² Beale, 1055.

⁹³ Osborne, *Revelation*, 738.

⁹⁴ Aune, 52c:1126.

⁹⁵ Brown and Comfort, 910.