

The Message of Revelation Alpha and Omega Revelation 1:1-8

Intro: Jesus is the All-sufficient One, as we have seen in every book of the New Testament. John introduces him here as “the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth” (Revelation 1:5).

The Almighty God, “who is, who was, and who is to come,” announces to this world, “I am the Alpha and the Omega” (Revelation 1:8). This A to Z of the Greek alphabet aims to put a parenthesis around time itself. God, who is eternal in his existence, is the A to Z of this world. Using language as a metaphor, everything that exists is constructed from his building blocks.

Jesus declares himself to be the First and the Last in Rev. 1:17 and the Alpha and Omega in Rev. 22:12. John begins this book by describing the awesome nature of our eternal God and the unlimited authority of his faithful witness, Jesus Christ, “who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood” (Revelation 1:5).

This Christmas we are dealing with ultimate reality—our awesome God—bearing witness to his glory by sending his One and Only Son.

The persecution is widespread in John’s day. Many who formerly associated with the church have fallen away. Some have become openly **apostate**, declaring they no longer believe the truth. Others have abandoned the teachings of Jesus. We don’t usually think about Revelation as a practical book, but it is. It points us to the proper behavior in the here and now.

John is not going to tell them that obedience and faithfulness to God will make them **healthy and wealthy**. He himself had been exiled, thrown out of his own city and country. If Christians remain true, the Emperor may see that they starve. They may be tortured or martyred and may lose positions of power or influence.

The elder apostle writes to the beleaguered church. He is challenging them to faithfulness. He knows the pressures they are under. He is going to provide for them the fundamentals of good decision-making. He will lay a spiritual **foundation** for their behavior that will sustain them when they face severe trials.

***We are watching the construction of the new twin span bridges of Interstate 10 across Lake Pontchartrain. The construction crews spent months doing nothing but driving piles into the bottom of the lake. John is driving piles in Revelation.

I. JESUS IS THE TIMEKEEPER v3, 4—*the time is near... Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come.* Jesus told the disciples that he did not know the timing—only the Father knew (Matthew 24:36). But having ascended to his throne, Jesus is no longer limited in knowledge as he was in the incarnation. He is the First and Last, as he declares to John in Rev. 1:17. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, as he declares in Rev. 22:13.

The timing of that first Christmas was perfect in every way. Jesus came in the fullness of time. God is the only one who can keep time for this whole planet because he is above and beyond us. He lives perfectly in the span of past, present and future. He runs the clock for the game of life.

A. He is the God of the PRESENT TENSE. He is the one who is active here and now in my life.

He knows my situation. He is intimately acquainted with all my ways. He has perfect timing. Like Gandalf the wizard, God is never early or late. He arrives precisely when he means to.

B. He is the God of the PAST TENSE. He knows everything from a perfect historical perspective. Nothing has missed his scrutiny. He was “not born yesterday.”

He inspired the prophets who told of the coming of the Christ child. He orchestrated events so that he was born in Bethlehem.

He knows our history completely, giving forgiveness.

C. He is the God of the FUTURE TENSE. He is the enduring one. “Time marches on”--right toward God who is the future.

God knows the future perfectly. You do not know the future perfectly. You may think you are immortal. You are wondering what you will be doing when you are forty or fifty or eighty. And you may not live to see another sunrise.

***The timekeeper in the football games is on the spot. He adds and subtracts seconds to the game because seconds matter a great deal when the season is at stake.

II. JESUS IS THE GATEKEEPER—*and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth* (v4-5) The seven spirits mean all spiritual wisdom rests in God. There is no access to the throne apart from the Spirit.

A. Jesus Christ is the Gatekeeper: ***He works security.

1. Of Truth--the faithful witness: *martos*. This is the word from which we get “martyr.” Jesus Christ is the first of the martyrs. He spoke the truth, lived the truth, and died for the truth. Therefore, he guards the gate of truth in this universe. When you are connected to Christ, you are connected to the truth.

Some of these original readers are facing martyrdom, and some Christians today are facing the same. Look to Jesus who did not shrink from the cross because it was the Father’s will.

2. Of Life--the firstborn from the dead—*prototokos*. Some of these readers are worried about dying. That is the ultimate weapon that Domitian has at his disposal--death. Yet Jesus has conquered death. He has the keys of hell and death at his side. He has conquered death and lives forevermore. He is life’s gatekeeper.

3. Of Power--the ruler of the kings of the earth—*archon*, “commander in chief.” Jesus is first in everything, including among the kings of the earth. He is LORD, and obeying and following him is the wisest and best thing we will ever do in this life or the next. All power is his in heaven and on earth.

B. HE IS THE ONLY GATEKEEPER. All your life people will try to convince you that there are other ways to God.

1. He is the one who loves us, not someone else.

2. He is the one who LIBERATED us and RESCUED us. He freed us from our sins by his blood. We are forgiven. And we are free. We cannot be trapped by the past mistakes. We cannot be judged for what he has removed and washed clean.

3. He is the KING and we are SUBJECTS. He is the HIGH PRIEST and we are priests. He is the Master. We are SERVANTS. He is WORTHY.

III. JESUS IS THE PROMISE-KEEPER—His word is his bond. He has told us the outcome. Looking to see what the end will be is a solid consideration when we are making decisions.

A. HE HAS EARNED OUR TRUST: *To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his*

blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father (Rev. 1:5-6).

1. He loves us. He has demonstrated that love beyond argument and debate by giving his life for us.
2. He freed us from our sins by his blood. He liberated us from the chains that we could not break in ourselves. He paid the debt we could not pay.
3. He made us to be a kingdom and priests. He has incorporated us into the Kingdom of God. He has given us the calling and responsibility and privilege of bringing to our world the good news of his love.

B. HE HAS MADE HIS PROMISE. *Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him—v7.*

1. He kept his promise in his first coming. He was faithful.
2. He will keep his promise in the Second Coming. “Look! **He** is coming with the clouds!” He could return any day. “Behold, I am coming soon!” (Revelation 22:12).

C. HE HAS ISSUED HIS WARNING. *And every eye shall see him, even those who pierced him (v7).*

1. Jesus looked at Jerusalem and said, “I wanted to gather you together as a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not come.” Jesus is our defender and friend.
2. All people who ever lived will be judged by Jesus. It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment. We are going to give an account to God.
3. We will see Jesus as both the JUDGE and the STANDARD for humanity. Even those who pierced him will see him. His executioners will experience his coming with the clouds.
4. **MANY WILL MOURN INSTEAD OF REJOICING.** All peoples will mourn because of him. Jesus said it like this, “I am the cornerstone. If anyone falls on this rock, he will be broken. But if this rock falls on anyone, it will grind him to powder.” The world will experience the judgment of God because they rejected Jesus. Jesus is God’s only plan of salvation.

CONCLUSION: If Jesus were to return with the clouds today, would you be rejoicing or mourning? Would you be ready or ill-prepared? You are not prepared to make your next decision until you are prepared to give your account to God.