

## Who is Jesus? The Alpha and the Omega

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost,

August 2, 2009

Who is Jesus? It's the question we've been pursuing this entire series. Throughout the series we've seen who Jesus is based on what He Himself says. He is the Jesus who does not mince words, but rather says things directly; the Jesus who loves us enough to break our legs and carry us, the Jesus who loves us enough not to leave us alone but instead prunes us, even though it's painful, to move us beyond ourselves, beyond what once was, to make us better, stronger and producing more fruit.

Today we are closing this series with the last thing Jesus says about Himself, and again, the impact that should have on us today, tomorrow and on into the future. I invite you to open your Bibles to our New Testament reading, Revelation chapter 1, verses 8-18, and then put a bookmark of sorts there, and turn to chapter 21, verse 6.

Revelation is the last book in the Bible, written by the last living Disciple, John. The book was written around the year 90, and was also the last book, chronologically, to be written. The rest of the New Testament books, with the exception of the ones written by John (the Gospel of John and 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> John) were written much earlier, within 10 – 30 years of the resurrection of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

The book of Revelation often gets tagged as a book that is all about the end times, and I will admit that I've even referred to it as that from time to time. While it is true that much of the book is about that, the beginning of the book contains letters Jesus dictated to seven different churches, what He did not like about what they were doing (Law); what He did like about what they were doing (Gospel), and what they needed to do in response (Sanctification). Many people shy away from the book of Revelation because they think it's too hard to understand. It *can* be a hard book if you're not familiar with the context and especially the Old Testament, but the first three chapters are fairly simple and straightforward, and I encourage you all to read them if you want to know what Jesus wants His churches to look like.

In order for Jesus to tell them all that He did, though, He started off reminding them of something very important at both the beginning and end of the book. Let's take a look at chapter 1, verse 8: "I am the Alpha and the Omega... who is, who was and who is to come, the Almighty." Chapter 21 verse 6 says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End."

Who is Jesus? You have to understand your Greek here. Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, Omega is the last letter. Jesus is the Alpha to the Omega, the A to the Z, the Beginning

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<sup>1</sup> Strobel, Lee; *The Case for Christ*

to the End! There is no one that came before Him, and no one that's going to come after Him that's going to be greater than He is. He is the all powerful, the almighty, the one and only God.

The last book of the Bible is book-ended, if you will, starts and concludes with Jesus saying that He is the beginning and ending of all that there is – the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end!

There is nothing above Him – He is God.

Everything else is beneath Him – He is the creator and sustainer of all there is.

What does this mean for us today?

This means His Word is absolute – no second guessing or trying to conform His Words to our opinions. No, “I know what the Bible *says*, but here's what I *think*.”

This means He is the final authority on everything – no setting aside His Word and putting our thoughts in its place.

You can make a note in your Bibles next to these verses either in Chapter 1 or chapter 21: Revelation 22:18-19, “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.”

That's a pretty stern warning. Why is it there? Because Jesus' Word is final. There is no taking away anything from any part of scripture without undermining what God has said, and there is no adding anything to scripture without putting words in God's mouth. And since He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, that means He gets to have the final word!

And that is one of the most comforting and loving things we could hear: our God, our Jesus, doesn't change. What was true 6000 years ago, was true 2000 years ago, is still true today, and will still be true into the future – because our Jesus said it!

He is the Alpha, and you can also write John 1:1-3, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning . Through Him all things were made, and without Him nothing was made that has been made.” Jesus didn't just suddenly appear on the scene 2000 years ago, He was there in the very beginning because He is God. He is the I AM, and He does not change! That is a very good thing!

Now New Englanders understand this. New Englanders understand you have to have a solid foundation under your house, especially if you live on the ocean. Last week when Stacey's parents were visiting, we all went to the 'beach' in Marshfield, and Alannah and I went into the *very cold* ocean. Now, where the rock ledge was, the waves pounded on them, but they didn't

move – the waves were broken up, destroyed and lost their strength; where the sand castles were, even the smallest wave eroded it until there was nothing left.

I could have went and stood on the rocks if I wanted to, and would have been safe against the assault of the very cold water coming in on the waves. I could have also stood on a mound of sand and as the water splashed on that foundation (...and did I mention that the water was really, really cold?) it would have washed out from under me.

That solid foundation that doesn't change is needed if the thing that is built is going to last. The solid, unchangeable foundation of our I AM, is needed if we are to last. It's a good thing, because it means no matter what happens in this life, no matter what anyone else says, no matter how the winds of opinion or society blow, God remains the same. He is a safe harbor in the storm; the solid foundation in a world of shifting sand; the Alpha and the Omega for all life's questions, concerns and difficulties.

I'd like to invite you to make one last note in the margins of your Bibles next to chapter 21,verse 6: Matthew 16:15, 'But what about you?' Jesus asked. 'Who do you say I am?'

We've explored His own words in this series, now the question comes down to each of us individually. Who is He? Who do you say that He is? What are we going to do with Jesus? How is He going to change us?

He is either the great I AM, God Himself, who took on flesh and bone, or He is just another man.

He is either the Bread of Life who requires complete surrender to Him and tells us to stop grumbling, or He is a feel-good teacher who says anything goes.

He is either the Light of the World who shines in to our lives in order to expose our sins and forgive them, or He is a blind guide who overlooks sin and doesn't think forgiveness is important.

He is either the Gate through which we enter into Heaven, or He is a liar who leads us astray.

He is either the Good Shepherd who loves us enough to 'break our legs' so He can carry us and protect us, or He doesn't care enough to bother with us and doesn't care that there is an eternity in hell waiting for those who reject Him.

He is either the Resurrection and the Life who offers Eternal Life in Heaven, or He is a dead man still buried in an unmarked tomb 'over there' and the life we have right now is as good as it gets.

He is either *the* Way, *the* Truth and *the* Life, or He's nothing more than just another spiritual teacher, on the same level as the Dali Lama, Confucius, or Buddha.

He is either the Branch who loves us enough to prune us, or He is someone who ignores us and leaves us on our own.

He is either the Alpha and the Omega, or He is a liar with a big ego.

So, who do you say that He is?

Would you please pray with me?

Jesus, thank You for Your clear words in the Bible. You have opened Yourself up to us and made it very clear how much You love us, and to what extent You will go to save us.

Forgive us for putting our thoughts, opinions and what our sinful three pounds of brain can come up with over You.

Send Your Holy Spirit to us, and bring us to confession, repentance and a new understanding of who You are, how much You love us, and how much You desire to change us and make us a new people.

You are the Alpha and the Omega. You were there in the beginning, and You will be there into eternity. Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Come quickly and take us Home to be with You.

Thank You, our Great I AM.

Amen.