

REV Bible Commentary for: Revelation 1:8

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God.” These words apply to God, not to Christ. The one, “who is, and who was and who is to come” is clearly identified in the context as God, not Jesus Christ. [Revelation 1:4-5](#) reads: “Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, 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.” The separation between “the one who was, is and is to come” and Jesus Christ can be clearly seen. The one “who is, and who was and who is to come” is God.

This verse is made slightly more ambiguous in the KJV than the REV because the word “God” is left out of the Greek text from which the KJV was translated. Nevertheless, modern textual research shows conclusively that it should be included, and modern versions do include the word “God.”

The phrase “the Alpha and the Omega,” has caused many people to believe this verse refers to Christ. However, study of the occurrences of the phrase indicates that the title “Alpha and Omega” applies to both God and Christ. Scholars are not completely sure what the phrase “the Alpha and the Omega” means. Lenski concludes, “It is fruitless to search Jewish and pagan literature for the source of something that resembles this name Alpha and Omega. Nowhere is a person, to say nothing of a divine Person, called ‘Alpha and Omega,’ or in Hebrew, ‘Aleph and Tau.’”^a

Although there is no evidence from the historical sources that anyone is named “the Alpha and Omega,” Bullinger says that the phrase “is a Hebraism, in common use among the ancient Jewish Commentators to designate the whole of anything from the beginning to the end; *e.g.*, ‘Adam transgressed the whole law from Aleph to Tau’ (Jalk. Reub., fol. 17.4).”^b That would make the expression the figure of speech, polarmerismos, similar to ‘and there was evening, and there was morning,’ which stands for the whole day, in [Genesis 1](#). The best scholarly minds have concluded that the phrase has something to do with starting and finishing something, or the entirety of something. Norton writes that these words, “denote the certain accomplishment of his purposes; that what he has begun he will carry on to its consummation.”^c

Since both God and Jesus Christ are “the Alpha and the Omega” in their own respective ways, there is good reason to believe that the title can apply to both of them, and no good reason why this title makes the two into “one God.” The titles “Lord” ([Rom. 10:9](#)), “Savior” ([Luke 1:47](#)), and “King of kings” ([1 Tim. 6:14-16](#)) apply to both God and Christ, as well as to other men. As with “Lord,” “Savior” and “King of kings,” this title fits them both. God is truly the beginning and the end of all things, while Christ is the beginning and the end because he is the firstborn from the dead, the Author and Finisher of faith, the Man by whom God will judge the world, and the creator of the new ages to come (see [Heb. 1:10](#) and see [commentary on Heb. 1:10](#)).

The opening eight verses of Revelation are very choppy, as are the openings of many of the Epistles. The multiple doxologies make the opening choppy. As we read we notice: the first two verses explain a couple of things about the book of Revelation. Then [Revelation 1:3](#) changes the subject, and is a blessing upon those who read and those who hear. Then, [Revelation 1:4](#) and the first half of verse 5 are the “to whom” the book of Revelation is addressed. The last half of verse 5, and verse 6, are a doxology to Christ (this would have been easier to see if verse 6 had started with “To him who loves

us,” which is in the middle of verse 5). Verse 7 is an exclamation to the people that Jesus Christ is coming. Verse 8 is a doxology to God, who is “the Power” behind the Return of Jesus Christ. That verse 7 is about Jesus’ coming while verse 8 is a doxology to God should not confuse us; as we have just seen, the opening verses change subjects a lot.

[For more on the figure of speech polarmerismos, see [commentary on Josh. 14:11](#). For more on [Revelation 1:8](#), see J. S. Hyndman, *Lectures on the Principles of Unitarianism*, 1824; and Donald Snedeker, *Our Heavenly Father Has No Equals*, 1998.]

R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Revelation*, 51.

a)

E. W. Bullinger, *Commentary on Revelation*, 147-48.

b)

Andrews Norton, *A Statement of Reasons for Not Believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians*, 479-80.

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