

Revelation 1:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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.... This verse from Revelation's vision of vision of the glorified christ - his majesty, authority, and presence among the churches employs apocalyptic imagery rich with Old Testament allusions and symbolic meaning. The Greek text uses vivid apocalyptic language characteristic of Jewish prophetic literature, drawing heavily from Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Zechariah.

The symbolism must be interpreted within its first-century context while recognizing timeless spiritual realities. The imagery would resonate powerfully with persecuted believers facing Roman imperial cult worship, providing hope that despite present suffering, Christ reigns sovereign and will consummate His kingdom. The apocalyptic genre uses symbolic numbers (seven, twelve, 144,000), colors, beasts, and cosmic imagery to convey theological truth rather than photographic descriptions.

Christologically, Revelation consistently exalts Jesus as the victorious Lamb, the faithful witness, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Every vision ultimately points to Christ's supremacy, His finished redemptive work, and His certain return to judge the living and dead and establish the new creation.

Historical Context

John received this revelation circa AD 95 during Domitian's persecution, exiled on Patmos for his testimony. The seven churches of Asia Minor faced increasing pressure to participate in emperor worship and pagan religious practices. Refusal meant economic hardship, social ostracism, and potential martyrdom. Understanding this context illuminates Revelation's encouragement to faithful endurance.

The apocalyptic genre was familiar to first-century Jewish and Christian readers. Rather than newspaper-style predictions, apocalyptic literature uses symbolic imagery to reveal spiritual realities behind earthly events, encourage the faithful, warn the unfaithful, and assert God's ultimate sovereignty over history. Parallels with Daniel, Ezekiel, and intertestamental apocalyptic writings would help original readers decode the symbols.

Rome's imperial cult demanded worship of Caesar as divine, placing Christians in impossible situations—compromise their faith or face persecution. Revelation identifies Rome as "Babylon" and assures believers that despite appearances, the Lamb conquered through His death and resurrection, and all earthly kingdoms will submit to His reign.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 1:8 reveal God's character, particularly His sovereignty, holiness, and justice?

2. What specific encouragement or warning does this verse offer for maintaining faithful Christian witness amid cultural pressure?
3. How does this passage point to Christ's victory and the hope of new creation, and how should that shape your present priorities?

Interlinear Text

Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ Α καὶ ὁ Ω, ἀρχὴ καὶ
 I am which Alpha and which Omega the beginning and
 G1473 G1510 G3588 G2532 G3588 G5598 G746 G2532

 τέλος, λέγει ὁ κύριος ὁ ὥν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ
 the ending saith which the Lord which G5607 and which was and
 G5056 G3004 G3588 G2962 G3588 G2532 G3588 G2258 G2532

 ὁ ἐρχόμενος ὁ παντοκράτωρ
 which to come which the Almighty
 G3588 G2064 G3588 G3841

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 44:6 (References Lord): Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.

Revelation 22:13 (Parallel theme): I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Isaiah 43:10 (References Lord): Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

Isaiah 48:12 (Parallel theme): Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.

Revelation 21:6 (Parallel theme): And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

Isaiah 41:4 (References Lord): Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he.

Revelation 1:4 (Parallel theme): John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

Revelation 11:17 (References Lord): Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

Revelation 1:17 (Parallel theme): And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

Revelation 4:8 (References Lord): And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org