

## **SERMON: A GREAT ENDING AND A GREATER BEGINNING**

### **Revelation 1:8**

**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.**

### **Introduction**

It has been said, “Goodness with no might will never win the fight against the forces that are wrong but strong.” No matter how meritorious or lofty your ideals are, if you cannot make them a reality, they are really just fantasies. Before describing the many visions to be revealed about the end times and the defeat of Satan, John recorded the sovereign words of Jesus to assure us that He is able to bring them all to pass. Since one of the main themes in the book of Revelation is the conflict between the powers of good and evil, readers are reminded of who really has the power. He makes it clear that Jesus has the power. Jesus legitimately claims the attributes of God the Father because He is God. Jesus is God. John 1:1 makes that crystal clear. First, He is Alpha and Omega, the A and Z, the one in control from the beginning of time until after the end of time. His power is further noted by the phrase, who is, who was, and who is to come. Finally, His power is seen in the title Almighty – the One who can never be defeated.

We are near the close of one year and near the dawning of a new year. We must remember that God is with us through it all. It is human to have mixed emotions about change and transitions. We have mixed emotions as we transition from one year to the next year. There is much to consider from international concerns, such as wars and political unrest, to artificial intelligence, to health issues, and to financial issues, just to name a few. Some may be glad to see the old year pass because of difficulties, but still wonder what the New Year will bring. I emphatically assert that even if you had difficulties in 2024, it was still a good year because Romans 8:28 tell us “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” This is not dismissing or trivializing your problems, but seeing, in faith, beyond your problems. Please remember, everything that happened in 2024 was either ordained by God or allowed by God.

This verse and other verses in God’s Holy Word bring comfort and assurance during these times of change. To quote Kingfish from the now politically incorrect Amos and Andy sitcom, “Change is here to stay.” Change is even changing; the rate of change is constantly accelerating. As soon as you familiarize yourself with one update on your cell phone or computer, they send you another update, and the learning process starts all over again. People change, nations change, technology changes, fashions change, but

God does not change. Hebrews 13:8 tells us, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and forever.” God does not change, but he changes people, nations, and the course of history. He is in control.

God is with us at the end of each year and at the beginning of each New Year and He is with us between the beginning and the end. He is with us in the middle. God is with us when we start new endeavors; He is with us when the endeavors conclude with success. He is with us when we end one season of life and enter into another season of life. Let’s look at a few of the theological and practical implications of this power verse.

## **Exposition**

### **1. There Is No Reason To Grieve Over Past Failures.**

(Learn From Failures, But Do Not Live In Your Failures.)

(If Peter Had Lived In His Failure Of Denying Jesus, He Would Have Never Preached On The Day Of Pentecost.)

### **2. There Is No Reason To Be Fearful Of The Future.**

(Your Future Is In God’s Hands.)

(Avoid The Seven Debilitating Ds: Distractions, Distress, Discouragement, Disappointment, Disorganization, Despair, and Despondency.)

(When One Good Thing Ends A New Good Thing Begins.)

### **3. There Is A Reason – A Very Good Reason - To Give God Glory For Your Past Accomplishments.**

(When You Celebrate Past Accomplishments, Please Give God The Credit.)

(He Gave You The Mind To Think Of It, The Will To Do It, And The Strength To Execute It.)

(Let’s Celebrate What God Has Done In 2024.)

(Let’s Look Forward To What God Will Do In 2025.)

## **Closing Thoughts**

We can move boldly – not arrogantly - into the New Year. As we allow God to order our steps, 2025 will be greater than 2024. I will close with a story that made the news a few weeks ago. An elderly man with dementia wandered away and was missing. The authorities initiated a search. They brought in blood hounds that located him. Thank God he was okay. He was peacefully sitting under a tree. When the blood hounds located him, they began to lick him in the face as a sign of affection. The handlers had never seen that reaction from the canines before. They were pleasantly surprised and amazed to the point of being joyfully dumbfounded. (Blood hounds, as we all know, are also used to hunt down fugitives.) The dogs' display of affection was more newsworthy than the actual locating of the elderly gentleman. I immediately thought of verse six of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. We have two friendly blood hounds name Goodness and Mercy that will “chase” and protect us all the day of our earthly lives. (The Hebrew is better translated as chase rather than follow.) We cannot get away from them; they are sent by God. They will chase us down, even when we veer from the right road. They will be with each of us in 2025.

Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

## **Related Scriptures**

**Revelation 1:11; Revelation 21:6; Revelation 22:13.**

## **End Notes**

1. The phrase “Alpha and Omega” alludes to a common practice of that day. During this time period, paper - I use the term loosely - was very expensive and difficult to manufacture. People wrote on parchment, papyrus, and animal skins. Because of this scarcity, people wrote on a piece of paper until there was no more blank space left on it. Thus, a single piece of paper could easily have several different documents written on it. For example, a letter and an inventory would be written on the same medium. At the end of one letter or document, another letter or document would be written. To distinguish between the different writings, at the beginning of a particular composition they would place a big “alpha” and at the end of the writing, they would place a big “omega.” It was common for a big alpha to be placed directly below a big “omega.” This

was to clearly demarcate the two different writings. Paper was so expensive and scarce that they did not put spaces between words, or spaces between lines. The reader had to mentally separate the words. This was not as big a problem as it appears, because ancient languages did not have vocabularies as extensive as our modern languages.

On another note, the expensiveness and scarcity of paper explains why music scores used to have so many repeat signs and all of those Italian words to indicate how to navigate the score. This irritates performers today, but it made sense a few centuries ago. Some publishers have full production scores of classics without any repeats. Some of the diehards don't like them. They believe you ought to perform with a score just as the composer wrote it.

A vocal score is called an "octavo." It is so named because they would take a big sheet of paper cut into eight pieces and the composition have to fit on the eight pages, back and front. Thus, they had to use a bunch of repeat signs and phrases like *da capo al coda* or *dal segno al fine*. (We all know that anything beginning with the letters "oct" has eights parts, like octagon or octopus.) If you care nothing about this historical trivia, just remember how blessed we are in this era. We think nothing about using a Kleenex or a paper towel. People who wrote the New Testament had to be concerned about not having enough space to finish the epistle. Great composers like Bach had to be concerned if they could get the entire cantata on the allotted paper.

2. In my sermon preparation I always try to read the text in the original language. My Greek and Hebrew are getting rusty. I may need a refresher course. There is something in this text that blows me away every time I read it. I am not sure of the theological implications, if any at all. In the original Greek, alpha is spelled out, but omega is not. "I am a-l-p-h-a and O". Why? Was John trying to save space on the paper? When I get to heaven, after I praise God for a billion years, I will find John and ask him.

3. The translators of the King James Version of the Bible kept meticulous notes. They documented their challenges and debates about the best words and phrases to use. One of the debates was whether to use the English letters "a" and "z" or use the names and order of the Greek letters. Thank God they decided to use the Greek letters. To me, it just sounds better to say "alpha and omega" rather than "a and z." Maybe this is true because this is what we have heard all of our lives. Be that as it may, it still sounds better. It sounds more liturgical.

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