

## **“The Beginning, the End and Everything in Between”**

**Revelation 1:4b-8**

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There were two songs which were sung over and over again at my college during freshman year. The first song was an embarrassing song. When a guy came to pick you up for a date during freshman year he came to the front desk at the dorm and the person at the desk would call your room to let you know he had arrived. Other young women on the hall would accompany you to the lobby. Then the group would sing the embarrassing song to your date. It had a way of cutting down on second dates for sure!

The other was the sorority Greek alphabet song. Though I was not a member of a sorority, the song was sung so many times during fall rush that I couldn't help learning it. This gave me a leg up when I went to seminary and took Greek. I'm not quite sure what it says about me that after hearing the Greek alphabet song 500 times and studying Greek for two years in seminary that I cannot recite the entire Greek alphabet today, but I can remember the embarrassing song we sang when dates arrived at the dorm.

Despite my poor memory, I do remember Alpha and Omega – the **first and last letters of the Greek alphabet**. In Revelation John receives a vision in which God says: **“I am the alpha and the omega, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”** Later in the book of Revelation the risen Christ Jesus is also said to be the **alpha and the omega**.

You might be thinking: “That’s all Greek to me.” What difference does this make if God and Jesus are the alpha and omega? What difference does it make that they are the A and the Z?

Have you ever heard someone say “We covered everything from A to Z in that class”? Or, “that store has everything from A to Z in it”?

I hear a lot of people say today: “I’ve got you covered, or “I’ve got your back.” This idea might also help us understand the idea of Alpha and Omega.

In the passage we read from Revelation, Jesus is described in many ways – pretty much everything from A to Z:

**Faithful witness** – Revelation was read by people who were being persecuted by the Romans for being Christians. Some had family members and friends who had been killed for being faithful. When they heard of Jesus as being a “faithful witness” they felt a connection with him because he, too, had stood before Roman authorities. He had stood firm and “borne his witness, even at the cost of his life.” (*Interpretation*, Boring, p. 76)

**Firstborn from the dead** – The first hearers of these words would be given hope by hearing that Jesus was the **FIRSTBORN** from the dead. He had suffered and died for his faith, but that wasn’t the end of the story. There was a future beyond death. For those facing the choice of standing up for their faith even if meant death at the hands of the Romans, this reminder of the life to come was powerful. For us, this description of Jesus is a reminder of our hope. Death is not the end of the story. It is not the final chapter.

**Ruler of the kings of the earth** – Apparently this title was one used by the Roman Caesars about themselves. John, the writer of Revelation, is basically saying what a joke it is for the Caesars to think of themselves in this way. Jesus is the king. Jesus is the ruler of the kings of the earth. Jesus’ rule is indeed over all rulers past, present and future. His kingship supersedes that of all other kings – from A to Z.

**One who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood** – self-explanatory, but profound. Jesus loves us. We sing it as children; sometimes we forget it as teens and adults. Jesus gave his life so that we can be set free from our sins. He has us covered – every sin in our life, from A to Z, is covered. Our past sins are washed clean, setting us free for a future of hope, grace and service.

There is a song by The Newsboys called “You Are My King.” The words are: “I’m forgiven because you were forsaken; I’m accepted, you were condemned. I’m alive and well, your Spirit lives within me because

you died and rose again. Amazing love, how can it be that you my king would die for me? Amazing love, I know it's true. And it's my joy to honor you in all I do; in all I do, let me honor you. You are my King . . . in all I do let me honor you . . . it's my joy to honor you."

**One who has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father** – We are freed from sin for service. "You are my king. In all I do let me honor you. It's my joy to honor you."

**One who is coming again.** The promise of our faith is that Jesus will come again. His coming will cause us to repent. With his coming, all things will be made new and all things will be set right. Our future is in His loving hands.

The message to those early Christians is the same as it is to us, though our situations and contexts are different in some ways. Jesus has us covered – our past, present and future; everything from A to Z. He has our back. We are not alone.

**Many of us are paralyzed by our past** – the wrong we've done and the wrong that has been done to us

Past sin – it's covered. Maybe you've done everything from A to Z. You are forgiven and set free to live.

Wrongs done to you. Some of us have suffered greatly at the hands of other people. It's certainly fair to ask God: "Where were you? Why didn't you intervene or prevent what happened?" I cannot answer the question of why God didn't intervene or prevent what happened other than to say that God has allowed human beings the ability to choose to do good or evil and everything in between. What I do believe, however, is that God suffered with us. God was present and is present in our pain. I believe God can heal our wounds and is very much with us on the journey of healing.

**Many of us find ourselves lost and without purpose in the present.** But we are "saved to serve." We are a kingdom and priests to serve God. We do not have to wander aimlessly through life. We do not have to fear that we haven't found the right job or the right school or that we don't have a job at all or a school at all. Wherever we are, whatever we are doing we have a purpose. That purpose is to serve God. We can

do that wherever we are if that is our mindset and our objective in life. In all we do, we can take joy in honoring Christ as our loving King.

**Some of us find ourselves fearing the future – every stage of life. We are fearful about our kids' and grandkids' futures. We are fearful about our aging parents' futures.**

A song that has become a favorite for many of us here is “I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry.” The words remind us of God’s presence in every stage of our lives. “I was there to hear your borning cry, I’ll be there when you are old. I rejoiced the day you were baptized to see your life unfold. I was there when you were but a child; I was there when you wandered off to find where demons dwell. If you find someone to share your time and you join your hearts as one, I’ll be there to make your verses rhyme from dusk till rising sun. In the middle ages of your life, not too old, no longer young, I’ll be there to guide you through the night, complete what I’ve begun. When the evening gently closes in and you shut your weary eyes, I’ll be there as I have always been with just one more surprise.”

**God is at the beginning, middle and ending of every stage of our lives and every situation we encounter. God has everything covered from A to Z.**

Today I pray we can find comfort, hope and renewed purpose in knowing that God and Jesus are the Alpha and the Omega; they are the beginning and the end and everything in between. I hope you will find comfort in knowing Christ has you covered – past, present and future. May that knowledge free us to live courageously, filled with hope, joy and purpose. May that knowledge free us to joyfully honor God in all we do.