

JESUS, THE BEGINNING AND THE ENDING

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SCRIPTURE: Revelation 1:4-8.

Grace unto you, and peace, from him who is, and who was, and who is to come; who hath sent forth his angel from before his throne, to testify unto those who are the seven servants over the seven churches. Therefore I, John, the faithful witness, bear record of the things which were delivered me of the angel, and from Jesus Christ the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. And unto him who loved us, be glory; who washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God his Father. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. For behold, he cometh in the clouds with ten thousands of his saints in the kingdom, clothed with the glory of his Father. And every eye shall see him; and they who pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. For he saith, I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Men are constantly aware of the passing of time. We dwell in time. So far as our experience and recollection go, our physical lives had a beginning, and some day they shall have an ending. Because we are greatly restricted and limited by the mortality and the temporality of our existence, we mark off the days and the years, and as we grow older, we begin to estimate the days of life that yet remain to us. Even when we come to know Jesus, and to experience the life that is in him so that we know eternal life-now -- even while we look forward to the boundless and timeless reaches of eternity, we are still keenly aware of the passing of time here and now. At the moment, we are all keenly aware of the imminent passing of an old year, and the beginning of a new.

God, however, takes no notice of the passing of time, because he transcends and is above and beyond the limitations of time and space. We say that he is infinite and eternal, which is simply to say that he knows no bounds or limitations in time or space, while at least in this life we are bound by both time and space. God is from everlasting to everlasting, from all eternity to all eternity. He is without beginning of days or end of years. He is self-existent -- the personality who is the ultimate source of all other personality, of all life, of all existence, both physical and material. He existed before time began; he will still exist when time shall be no more. With him a thousand years is as one day, and one day is as a thousand years.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Deity incarnate in human flesh, was and is likewise timeless. He is the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, Alpha and Omega. Though he is several times called "the beginning," and in Revelation 3:14 is called "the beginning of the creation of God," he himself had no beginning. He was with the Father in the beginning; he was co-existent with God. He was not created or made, but is self-existent, infinite, eternal -- a part of the self-existent, infinite, and eternal Godhead. Once when called into question about his claims of divinity and pre-existence he said, "Before Abraham was, I AM." This statement takes on added significance if we remember that "I AM" was the name by which God was known to Moses. As we have already noted in a previous sermon, unless Jesus was Deity -- unless there was in him a quality of life totally different from the frail mortality that is in men, he could not have overcome death as he did to bring about the atonement. Only the power of infinite Deity could have brought about an infinite atonement -- an atonement which knew no bounds of time or space, but which was efficacious to release all men from the power of death, and offer to every man salvation on the terms of repentance and obedience. Jesus was Deity. He was, in the language of one of the ancient creeds,

"very God of very God."

What then is the explanation of such verses as Revelation 3:14 where Jesus is called "the beginning of the creation of God," and Romans 8:29 and Colossians 1:15, where Jesus is called "the first-born of every creature?" What is the meaning of the term, "God Only Begotten Son?" Jesus is the "Only Begotten" because no other man ever born of woman was miraculously begotten by the Holy Ghost -- was Deity incarnate. Colossians 1:18 explains the phrase "the first-born of every creature," by denoting Jesus as the "first-born from the dead." He was the first, and last, and only man ever to taste of death and then rise from the dead, never to die again. Other men have been temporarily raised from the dead -- such as Lazarus -- but eventually they have died. Jesus, the first-born from the dead, was raised to immortality by the power of his Deity.

Jesus was the "beginning of the creation of God." Some have construed this verse to mean that Jesus was the first creature to be created by God; but nowhere in scripture is it either stated or implied that the Son was God's creature or creation. Jesus Christ, the Son, is the Creator, the Source, the Point of Origin, the Beginning, of all the creations of God. He was God's agent or instrument of creation by which all things were made. From him as the source or beginning of creation came all the material and spiritual creation of the universe, all the life and all the substance of the universe. As the "beginning of the creation of God," "all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made which was made." Being one with God, he can say with God, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last;" "I am he which is, and which was, and which is to come."

As Jesus is the beginning of all the creation of God, so shall he also be the ending. As the beginning was brought about by his wisdom and power and Deity, so shall the ending. When the earth shall have served her purpose, and when all men have been changed from mortality to immortality, then must every man return to Christ for judgment "He hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness." (Acts 17:31) "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ," (Rom. 14:10) "who shall judge the quick and the dead." (II Tim. 4:11) "Before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." (Matt 25:33) "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." "But who may abide the day of his coming?"

The material things of Christ's creation will also return to him who is the first and the last, the beginning and the ending. The earth, which then will have fulfilled her purpose, will be cleansed and purified and made a fit abode for the righteous; "the heavens shall shake and the earth shall tremble, and the mountains shall melt, and pass with a great noise, and the elements shall be filled with fervent heat; and the earth also shall be filled, and the corruptible works which are therein shall be burned up....." (II Peter 3:10) When man is redeemed, the material things of creation may then be redeemed too, that as all things came from Jesus Christ as the beginning of the creation of God, so all things shall return to him, and be put under his feet, under his dominion, "that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, even in him." (Eph. 1:10) All things shall be put under his feet. (Heb 2:8) Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:10) Time shall be no longer, (Rev. 10:6) but redeemed men shall dwell on a sanctified earth through the infinite reaches of eternity.

If we did not begin this year with Jesus Christ, let us end it with him, and begin the new year with him, that when we are returned to the presence of him who is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the ending, we may be found worthy of eternal life with him whose life has no beginning and no ending.