

I AM the Alpha and the Omega (Revelation 1:4-8)

John, the “beloved” disciple of Jesus, received this revelation from God while exiled by the Roman government to the isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea because of his Christian testimony. The writing took place in the mid-90s of the first century A.D. Revelation offers rich comfort to Christians, assuring them that they share in their Savior’s eternal victory.

⁴ John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: 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, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. ⁷ Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. ⁸ “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

1. From whom does John extend a greeting in the first two verses? What is the relationship between “grace” and “peace”?

2. What comfort do you find in each of the following phrases? “has freed us from our sins” “has made us to be a kingdom” “has made us to be . . . priests” “he is coming with the clouds”

3. In Revelation 22:13, Jesus further explains the “I am” statement found in this lesson, saying, “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.*” Read the passage below. What is the significance of this and each of Jesus’ “I am” statements?

- “This is what the LORD says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God” (Isaiah 44:6).

4. How does the phrase “who is, and who was, and who is to come” confirm Jesus’ claim: “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30)? To what divine attributes does the phrase refer?

5. As you sometimes struggle through these trying and difficult end times, what encouragement do you find in the fact that your Savior is unchangeable? eternal? “the Almighty”?

6. As the Christ, or Messiah, Jesus was anointed to be our Prophet, Priest, and King. What does verse 5 tell us about each of these offices?

7. Respond to the following:

- “I plan to be cremated and have my ashes scattered over two mountain ranges. If your Jesus does return to judge, well, ‘Good luck!’ trying to find me.”
- “We endorse completely the apostle Peter’s testimony regarding Jesus Christ: ‘There is not another name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must get saved.’ However, since Jesus said that he is ‘God’s Son’ and that the ‘Father sent me forth,’ Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that God is greater than Jesus. Jesus himself acknowledged: ‘The Father is greater than I am.’ Thus we do not believe that Jesus is equal with the Father, as the Trinity doctrine says. Rather, we believe that he was created by God and that he is subordinate to Him.” (From the tract “What Do Jehovah’s Witnesses Believe?” by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 1987.)
- While some feel otherwise and even deny that it is true, the fact that God does not change with the times is an unspeakably good thing.

Helps: (1) The verses contain a reference to the three persons of the triune God—the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son—from whom John extends the greeting. “Grace” is the undeserved love and pardon that God gives us in Christ. The result, or effect, is “peace”—peace with God and peace of conscience. (2) By his loving self-sacrifice, Christ has made atonement for our sins and has set us free forever from sin’s guilt, punishment, and power. Through faith in Christ, we have become members of his kingdom and have come into possession of his spiritual and eternal treasures. We have also been given the privilege of serving as priests, daily presenting our lives as thank offerings to God, acceptable through Christ. When Jesus returns “with the clouds,” that is, in glory and majesty, he will take us to reign with him in heaven in perfect righteousness and blessedness. (3) With each use of “I am,” Jesus proclaimed that he is the true and eternal LORD God—the great Jehovah, or Yahweh, of the Old Testament, who in his steadfast faithfulness has come into our world for our salvation. (4) The phrase is used to describe both the Father (verse 4) and the Son, Jesus (verse 8). The phrase not only refers to the divine attributes of eternal and unchangeable. A literal translation of the Greek—the Is One, and the Was One, and the Will-Be One—indicates that these attributes are actually the very essence of God (he is eternity and unchangeableness). (5) Jesus, the eternal Lord God, reigns supreme over all things, including the forces of evil. His love for us is unchanging, and he will remain faithful to his promise to use his power on our behalf, controlling all things for our eternal good. (6) Jesus the Prophet is “the faithful witness,” who reveals God’s Word to us in its truth. As our Priest, he gave his life as the sacrifice for the world’s sin and is “the firstborn from the dead,” having conquered death for us by his Easter morning resurrection. As King, Jesus rules over “the kings of the earth” and all other forces for the good of his people. (7) By his almighty power, Christ will have all people stand before him on the Last Day so that “every eye will see him”; no one will escape the judgment! The Jehovah’s Witnesses deny Scripture’s clear teaching of the Trinity and of the deity of Christ and, in doing so, destroy the certainty of salvation, because only God himself can offer a sufficient payment for the sins of the world. Christians, however, rejoice over the certainty of their salvation, because it is based on the unchanging grace and mercy of God in Christ.