

# JESUS, ALL IN ALL

By Rev. Will Nelken

*Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, California, on Sunday, October 31, 2010*

---

1 Corinthians 3:6-7 (WEY)

<sup>6</sup> *I planted and Apollos watered; but it was God who was, all the time, giving the increase.* <sup>7</sup> *So that neither the planter nor the waterer is of any importance. God who gives the increase is **all in all**.*

This is not the contemporary use of the phrase “all in all.” For instance, “All in all, it was a good vacation,” means “Considering everything we experienced, we had a good time.” “Considering everything” means weighing the good and the bad, the pleasant and the painful, the pluses and the minuses. “All in all” means “having considered all sides” of a matter.

But that is not what this verse of Scripture is saying. When the Bible says that “God... is all in all,” it means something quite different.

1 Corinthians 15:28 (ESV)

<sup>28</sup> *When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him (God) who put all things in subjection under him (the Son), that God may be **all in all**.*

God the Father has given authority (“all authority in heaven and on earth”) to His Son Jesus. When His work is completed and humanity’s salvation is fulfilled, Jesus will ascribe all glory to the Father for what He has accomplished and relinquish His authority, so that God will be “all in all.”

Or, as the New Living Translation puts it:

<sup>28</sup> *...so that God... will be **utterly supreme** over everything everywhere.*

When the Bible says that God is “all in all,” it means that He is “utterly supreme.” And when the Bible refers to Jesus with those words, it means that with respect to the human story, Jesus is utterly supreme.

Colossians 3:11

<sup>11</sup> *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but **Christ is all**, and in all.*

This, then, is the context of Jesus’ self-revealing words in the last chapter of the Bible.

Revelation 22:12-13

<sup>12</sup> *“Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds.*

<sup>13</sup> *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”*

These are other ways of saying, “I am all in all. I am utterly supreme.” That is the sum of it. But let’s take a closer look at its parts, these three metaphors from the final chapter of Scripture.

## Alpha – Omega (Boundaries)

*Alpha* is the first letter of the Greek alphabet; *omega* is the last.

Thus, to us Jesus would have said, “I am the ‘A’ and the ‘Z,’” as Eugene Petersen rendered it in *The Message*: “*I’m A to Z, the First and the Final, Beginning and Conclusion*” (Revelation 22:13).

Clearly, these are parallel descriptors. A and Z are the “first” and “final” letters, the “beginning” and the “conclusion” of our alphabet. The simple meaning is that Jesus embodies the entire sweep of things, from A to Z, from first to last, from beginning to ending, as John also wrote at the beginning of The Revelation.

Revelation 1:8

<sup>8</sup> *“I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end,” says the Lord God. “I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come—the Almighty One.”*

Jesus is (alive today), He always was (eternally existent), and He is still to come (to appear again on Earth). So, with respect to human history and all the affairs of humanity, Jesus is both the A and the Z, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

Hear this: Jesus is not simply defining His place in God’s plan; He is also describing His role in our lives, His relationship to every human being, whom He created to live eternally.

A to Z represent the letters from which every word is constructed, every thought is expressed, and every feeling is described. They are elements of expression. Everything God has to say *to you* is embodied in Jesus. But, more than that, everything God has to say *about you* is also embodied in Jesus. And further, everything you need to know about yourself, will also be understood through Jesus.

John 1:1-3 (CEV)

<sup>1</sup> *In the beginning was the one who is called the Word. The Word was with God and was truly God.* <sup>2</sup> *From the very beginning the Word was with God.* <sup>3</sup> *And with this Word, God created all things. Nothing was made without the Word.*

The full sweep of human experience, emotion, consciousness, understanding, discipline, practice, and purpose can be expressed in terms of Jesus. Do you need to cope with rejection or grief? Do you need to develop diligence or perseverance? Do you need to recover love or hope? Do you need to discover and embrace your purpose? The example and path to all these pursuits is in Jesus.

His words set the boundaries for living with God in the world. They tell us how to enter this life (*“He chose to give us birth through the word of truth.”* James 1:18; NIV). They tell us how to practice this life (*“And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.’”* Luke 1:38; ESV). And they tell us how to exit this life (*“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation.”* Luke 2:29-30; ESV).

Jesus is the A to Z.

## **First – Last (Relationships)**

Revelation 1:10-11

<sup>10</sup> *I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, 11 saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, **the First and the Last,**” and, “What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia.*

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, setting the boundaries for all written words. But “the First and the Last” do not set boundaries so much as establish relationships. It may be “first in time” or “first in order” or “first in power” or “first in kind.” “First” and “last” are relative terms that embrace everything in between and convey to everything in between *relationship*.

“First” may speak of importance (value), as in, “The first (most important) commandment is this: Love the Lord your God...” “First” may also address order (position), as in, “First the Son of Man must suffer terribly and be rejected.” (There is no salvation without the cross!)

Jesus was first in importance and also first in order, for He was “*the first-born Son, superior to all creation*” (Colossians 1:15; CEV), and “*the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent*” (Colossians 1:18; ESV), and “*the firstborn among many brothers and sisters*” (Romans 8:29; NLT).

These passages describe Jesus’ role in relation to us as our Leader (the first human to break the bands of death) and our Lord (preeminent and superior to us all). He has paved the way for us to follow, and Himself leads the procession of the faithful into the presence of God.

As the first of this new creation, He was also the last of the old order.

1 Corinthians 15:45 (CEV)

<sup>45</sup> *The **first** man was named Adam, and the Scriptures tell us that he was a living person. But Jesus, who may be called the **last** Adam, is a life-giving spirit.*

And, in this new order of everlasting life, Jesus’ resurrection spoke the final word to the corruption of the old order.

Romans 6:9 (MSG)

*We know that when Jesus was raised from the dead it was a signal of the end of death-as-the-end. Never again will death have the **last** word.*

Jesus *is* the first word (He was with God in the beginning), and He *has* the last word.

1 Peter 3:22 (MSG)

*Jesus has the **last** word on everything and everyone, from angels to armies. He’s standing right alongside God, and what he says goes.*

“What He says goes.” He is the final Authority, the Boss, the Master, the Lord. If you don’t have this kind of relationship with Jesus Christ, then you’re just a churchgoer, not a real Christian, because He is the First and the Last.

## **Beginning – End (Structure)**

Revelation 21:5-6

<sup>5</sup> *And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” And then he said to me, “Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.”<sup>6</sup> And he also said, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega — **the Beginning and the End**. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life.*

The Beginning and the End are elements of structure. A story has a beginning and it has an end. A project has a beginning and it has an end. The structure gives shape, meaning, and purpose to its various elements.

Hebrews 1:2 (MSG)

*By his Son, God created the world in the **beginning**, and it will all belong to the Son at the **end**.*

Jesus Christ is the Architect and Builder of this world, and it (and we) belongs to Him.

Romans 8:29 (MSG)

*God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided **from the outset** to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son.*

From the very beginning, God set His plan in motion to conform us to the image and likeness of His Son, Jesus. He has brought you to this point, and He will see you on to the end.

Hebrews 12:2 (GNT)

<sup>2</sup> *Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends **from beginning to end**.*

It is a matter of trusting faithfulness, keeping our eyes on Jesus, through it all.

Jude 24 (LB)

*And now—all glory to him who alone is God, who saves us through Jesus Christ our Lord; yes, splendor and majesty, all power and authority are his from **the beginning**; his they are and his they **evermore** shall be.*

From beginning to end, every situation is an opportunity for His power to be displayed, for His glory to be revealed, and for His people to rejoice in praise — even now — if we will keep trusting Him to lead and to act.

One day, news arrived that Jesus' good friend, Lazarus, was deathly sick.

John 11:4 (NLT)

<sup>4</sup> *But when Jesus heard about it he said, "Lazarus's sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this."*

Your life will not end a moment too soon, if you are in His hand. Nothing and no one can wrest you from the grip of His grace. Do not be afraid.

John 13:1 (NLT)

*He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them **to the very end**.*

He was there with you at the beginning, and He will be there for you to the end.

1 Corinthians 1:8-9 (NLT)

<sup>8</sup> *He will keep you **strong to the end** so that you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns.* <sup>9</sup> *God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The structure of this salvation lends security to the believer; we are in His hand, He is in our hearts. The same One who rescued us in the beginning will preserve us to the end. Be bold. Be strong. Be courageous. You can do everything required of you through Christ, who gives you strength (Philippians 4:13).

Jesus is the Beginning, and He is also the End.

He is the seed and the fruit, the source and the fulfillment. He is everything you have ever needed or will ever need for life and significance. Put your hope in Him. Put your trust in Him. Call upon His name. Give Him praise. Christ is all in all.