

Revelation 1:17

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.” (NIV)

1. The phrase, “the First and the Last,” is a title that is used five times in the Bible, twice in Isaiah of God (44:6; 48:12) and three times in Revelation of the Son (1:17; 2:8; 22:13). Trinitarians sometimes make the assumption that since the same title applies to both the Father and the Son, they must both be God. However, there is no biblical justification on which to base that assumption. When the whole of Scripture is studied, one sees that the same titles are used for God, Christ and men. Examples include “Lord” (see Rom. 10:9 above) and “Savior” (see Luke 1:47 above) and “King of kings” (see 1 Tim. 6:14-16 above). If other titles apply to God, Christ and men without making all of them into “one God,” then there is no reason to assume that this particular title would mean they were one God unless Scripture specifically told us so, which it does not.

2. In the Old Testament, God truly was “the First and the Last.” The meaning of the title is not specifically given, but the key to its meaning is given in Isaiah 41:4, in which God says He has called forth the generations of men, and was with the first of them and is with the last of them.

Isaiah 41:4

“Who has done this and carried it through, **calling forth the generations** from the beginning? I, the LORD—with the first of them and with the last—I am he.” Thus, the Bible connects the phrase “the First and the Last” with calling forth the generations.

While God was the one who called forth the generations in the Old Testament, He has now conferred that authority on His Son. Thus, it is easy to see why the Lord Jesus is called “the First and the Last” in the book of Revelation. It will be Jesus Christ who will call forth the generations of people from the grave to enter in to everlasting life. God gave Jesus authority to raise the dead (John 5:25-27). His voice will raise all dead Christians (1 Thess. 4:16 and 17), and he will change our bodies into new glorious bodies (Phil. 3:20 and 21). However, even when Jesus said he had the authority to raise the dead, he never claimed he had that authority inherently because he was God. He always said that his Father had *given* authority to him. While teaching about his authority, Jesus Christ was very clear about who was the ultimate authority: “The Son can do nothing by himself...the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son...For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in himself. And He has given him authority to judge” (John 5:19, 22, 26 and 27). If Jesus had the authority to raise the dead because he was in some way God, he never said so. He said he had his authority because his Father gave it to him. With the authority to raise the generations came the title associated with the existence of the generations, and thus after his resurrection Jesus Christ is called “the First and the Last.”

Morgridge, p. 122

Racovian Catechism, pp. 157-163

Snedeker, p. 469

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