

Revelation 1:8

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.” (*NIV*)

1. These words apply to God, not to Christ. The one, “who is, and who was and who is to come” is clearly identified from the context. Revelation 1:4 and 5 reads: “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, AND from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.” The separation between “the one who was, is and is to come” and Christ can be clearly seen. The one “who is, and who was and who is to come” is God.

2. This verse is made slightly more ambiguous in the *KJV* because the word “God” is left out of the Greek text from which the *KJV* was translated. Nevertheless, modern textual research shows conclusively that it should be included, and modern versions do include the word “God.”

3. Because of the phrase, “the Alpha and the Omega,” many feel this verse refers to Christ. However, a study of the occurrences of the phrase indicates that the title “Alpha and Omega” applies to both God and Christ. Scholars are not completely sure what the phrase “the Alpha and the Omega” means. It cannot be strictly literal, because neither God nor Christ is a Greek letter. Lenski concludes, “It is fruitless to search Jewish and pagan literature for the source of something that resembles this name Alpha and Omega. Nowhere is a person, to say nothing of a divine Person, called ‘Alpha and Omega,’ or in Hebrew, ‘Aleph and Tau.’”¹

Although there is no evidence from the historical sources that anyone is named “the Alpha and Omega,” Bullinger says that the phrase “is a Hebraism, in common use among the ancient Jewish Commentators to designate the whole of anything from the beginning to the end; e.g., ‘Adam transgressed the whole law from Aleph to Tau’ (Jalk. Reub., fol. 17.4)”² The best scholarly minds have concluded that the phrase has something to do with starting and finishing something, or the entirety of something. Norton writes that these words, “denote the certain accomplishment of his purposes; that what he has begun he will carry on to its consummation” (pp. 479 and 480).

Since both God and Jesus Christ are “the Alpha and the Omega” in their own respective ways, there is good reason to believe that the title can apply to both of them, and no good reason why that makes the two into “one God.” The titles “Lord” (see Rom. 10:9 above), “Savior” (see Luke 1:47 above) and “king of kings (see 1 Tim. 6:14-16 above) apply to both God and Christ, as well as to other men. As with “Lord,” “Savior” and “King of kings,” this title fits them both. God is truly the beginning and the end of all things, while Christ is the beginning and the end because he is the firstborn from the dead, the Author and Finisher of faith, the Man by whom God will judge the world, and the creator of the new ages to come (see Heb. 1:10 above).

Norton, pp. 479 and 480
Snedeker, pp. 385-389

Endnotes:

1. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* (Augsburg Pub. House, Minneapolis, MN 1963), p. 51.

2. E. W. Bullinger, *Commentary on Revelation* (Kregel Pub., Grand Rapids, MI, 1984), pp. 147 and 148.

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