

**Revelation 1: 8-11; “I am the Alpha and Omega”, Sermon # 7 in the series - “The Faithful and True Witness”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on January 29th, 2006 in the Afternoon Worship, and again on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010.**

When we read the words of Christ saying that He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the end, it may conjure up in our minds that which is true and appropriately applied to him but we may forget the context in which these verses were written and thus miss the real intent of His saying them here. It is true that Jesus Christ was the Alpha in the sense which we read of Him in John 1, “In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” “The same was in the Beginning with God.” And it is true that Jesus Christ will be the Omega, the One who will bring the End of the Age to pass by His returning in the clouds as we read about, and I spoke to you about, last week. We are further to understand however that He is the beginning and the end of all things related to the gospel, to His church, to our faith and everything related to it. This is how great and powerful and glorious our Lord Jesus is. I want you to see that this great declaration by the Lord Jesus of what He is, is mentioned twice in verses 8 and 11, and that we find something significant in between them. It is the sufferings of the Apostle John, and the sufferings of the people of God to whom he is writing. This is deliberate and it shows us that the Lord Jesus Christ, being the Alpha and Omega, means that He who is the Almighty will orchestrate by His power, everything related to our becoming and being faithful witnesses to Him. We are living in a world that wants to oppose the progress of the gospel. The purpose of John’s writing this book, therefore, is so that when the faith of Christians is low and they are called to suffer for it, that they will as John, hear the voice of this Scripture behind them, as loud as a trumpet, saying to them that Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End of everything that they want to become, and everything that they want to see happen in relation to the progress of truth in their lives. He is indeed the author and the finisher of our faith in every way.

So what we want to ask this afternoon is, “In what tangible ways is the Lord Jesus Christ the Alpha and the Omega of His saints, so that they can be His faithful witnesses?” Well there are 3 tangible ways given in the text: 1<sup>st</sup> – He is the Alpha and Omega in their tribulations. 2<sup>nd</sup> – He is the Alpha and Omega in the kingdom. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – He is the Alpha and Omega in building their patience.

**1st- He is the Alpha and Omega in their tribulations.** (Verse 9)

“I John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ was on the island that called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Now, if you will remember, back in verse 4 it was the Father who was spoken of as “the One who is and who was and who is to come.” But here in verse 9 it is most clearly and definitely spoken of in relation to

the Lord Jesus. And it is a very great proof of His deity, because the One described here is the “Almighty”. This is the One who is coming with clouds in verse 7 and the One who is the Son of Man in verse 13. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” it says in Hebrews 13: 8. And that verse is set in the context of the Christians of that day being exhorted to consider those who had the rule over them, who had spoken the Word of God to them. And they are exhorted to “follow their faith, considering the outcome of their conduct.” Here we find an almost identical situation to the one in Hebrews. John has been banished to the isle of Patmos for preaching and proclaiming the word of God and testifying of Jesus Christ as the only Savior of sinners. He speaks of the 7 churches to which he is writing as “brethren and companions” in the tribulation that he is experiencing. John is not alone in the tribulation that he is speaking of. He is speaking of it as something which many churches in that day were experiencing. The Romans persecuted the Christians who said Jesus was Lord, but who would not acknowledge Caesar to be “Lord”. It was at the end of the Emperor Domitian’s reign, from 81-96 A.D. that John was banished to this island. He was looked up to as the last apostle, the faithful elder and beloved teacher who had resided at Ephesus for 30 years. Now he is taken away from them. They were no doubt suffering for the sake of the gospel, as well. It was not the same kind of tribulation, but it was tribulation.

Sometimes Christians in our day, especially of the pre-millennial, pre-tribulational, and dispensational variety get all caught up in thinking about the great tribulation which is coming; the seven year period of time that they think will come in the future and which they will be taken away from in the “Rapture.” They think that they will be delivered from what they call “the wrath to come,” meaning this 7 year period of time. The Scriptures do not teach it. Rather they force the passage in Daniel 9 into the New Testament with their “gap theory” of the 70 weeks prophecy. But if you will turn with me to Daniel Chapter 9, verse 24, I would like to show you something from this passage. “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.” “Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.” “And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.” “The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.” “Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.” “And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation which is determined is poured out.” Here in Daniel

9, you will find that 70 sevens are decreed for the Jewish people. They are weeks of years. It is a period of 490 years. The first period of seven weeks takes us up to the rebuilding of the city; "The streets and walls shall be built again, even in troublous times." The 62 weeks brings us up to the time of the beginning of Christ's ministry, the time of John the Baptist beginning to preach, (for the Law and the Prophets were until John – Luke 16: 16, and since that time the Kingdom of God has been preached) and the final week brings us to the completion of Christ's ministry, His work being finished on the cross. We read, "the Messiah shall be cut off but not for Himself." He "confirmed a covenant with many for one week," that 7 years of ministry which takes in both John's ministry and the ministry of the Lord Jesus. Then it says, "In the middle of that week" (which scholars like Adam Clarke and Dean Prideaux believe should be understood as the later half of that week; the end of Christ's 3 1/2 year ministry) He brings an end to sacrifice and offering by the sacrifice of Himself. That completes the 70 weeks. And the later part of verse 26 and verse 27 is a prophecy of the wars of the Jews. It takes us up to the coming of Titus with the Roman armies in 70 A.D. to "destroy the city and the sanctuary." It does not relate to Christ's second coming at all, but rather to His first coming.

How could so many interpreters of prophecy in our day be so wrong concerning this prophecy and try to make it say something that it does not say? If they are wrong at this point, they are wrong about the nature of their Great Tribulation and the time of the Rapture as well. There will not be a 7 year Great Tribulation that is yet to come. The Rapture will not precede it. The abomination of desolation has already taken place in 70 A.D. when the Roman armies, with the eagles on their standards, came into the Sanctuary of the Most High God and desecrated it. (For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered. Matthew 24: 28) The Great Tribulation of Matthew 24: 21 is related to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem; the Jewish nation being destroyed and the people scattered and desolate, even until now. Our Lord Jesus Christ was the Alpha and the Omega of the Jewish nation. He is the King of the nations; the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He was Israel's beginning when He came in pre-incarnate form and revealed Himself to Abraham and Sarah and told them that they were going to have a child. He met Jacob at the fords of the Jabbok and wrestled with him there and told him that he would from that time forward be called Israel; a prince with God, because He had wrestled with God and prevailed. He came to His own in His incarnation and His own would not receive Him. He nevertheless chose His Apostles and said to them that He would build His church and that the gates of hell would not prevail against it. He has also been the Alpha and the Omega of the Church age in which we presently live. He was there at the beginning of the outreach of the Church at Pentecost and sent His Spirit to His church to begin the preaching of the gospel to the nations. He was with His persecuted people when Satan's strategy was to destroy the Church through a

succession of 10 Roman Emperors who wanted the worship of all their citizens to come to themselves instead of the one true and living God. He was with His struggling Church during the days of the battles for the definition of the doctrinal truths of the Trinity, the deity of Christ, and salvation by grace through faith. He has been the Alpha and the Omega in all the tribulations of His church during this time period from the rise of the Papal Antichrist until now, and He shall be with us to enable us to be faithful witnesses as well in the days to come. He will be the Alpha and the Omega to “ride the white horse to conquer the false system of the Roman Antichrist. And He shall send His Spirit in greater measure and light and power at the beginning of the Millennium to the conversion of many among the nations.

To help us to understand where we are now; there will be a time of “the slaying of the witnesses” toward the end of the 1260 days prophecy, a time period mentioned in the book of Revelation; chapter 11, verses 1-7. The 1260 days are actually years and at the end of that time period, there will be a 3 and a half year period of time; where the witness of Christ will be slain, at least in the 10 kingdoms of beast, and perhaps world-wide. And then the witness of the Church will be raised from the dead at the end of it, and the gospel will once again go forward to conquer the nations beginning with the conversion of the Jews. The Rapture of the Church will indeed come, but it will come at the end of the Millennium when Christ returns. The Rapture of the Church will not be a secret event, but rather open and public. Then; every eye shall see Him. Even those who pierced Him. That will also be the time of the general resurrection of all mankind from the dead. But you and I need to be concerned about a much more general tribulation that concerns Christians in all generations. Turn with me to John 15: 18. Here we find that tribulation will be a general characteristic of the whole church age. During the Church age there may be times where there is a general peace and even a time when organized persecution by systems of evil may not exist for a time during the Millennium, but the words of our Lord Jesus leave no doubt about what Christians are to expect during the whole of the church age. “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.”

And over in John 16, verses 32 and 33, Jesus lays out this tremendous truth which we all need to sit up and take notice of. “The hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.” “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” “This is the kind of tribulation that each one of us should expect. “If we were of the world, the world would love its

own.” But Christ is the Alpha and the Omega in all of our tribulations. John was banished for preaching the word and testifying of Jesus. Paul was treated the same way, and in Acts 14: 22 he and Barnabas “strengthened the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’” They knew that there would be a beginning and an end in their tribulations, and that Christ would be with them all the way through it.

**The 2nd tangible way that Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega of his saints is in regard to the kingdom .**

Verse 9 says, “I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom of Jesus.” Now I think John means this in relation to the kingdom’s advance. The truth advances in this unlikely way, through the power of Christ being seen in the weakness and difficulty and even the suffering of men as they live and preach the truth about Christ. This is how it was that Christ who is the foundation stone went about to establish His kingdom. This is how it will be with His Church, His people. It is living righteously and preaching boldly the truth of the Word. and then this testimony to Jesus is sealed by faithful men and women willing to humbly take opposition from those who they are trying to convince that this is the way to eternal life and everlasting joy and peace. This takes the power and the timing of the Alpha and Omega, Jesus Christ who orchestrates by his power everything related to our becoming faithful witnesses. How could the kingdom advance with John on the Isle of Patmos; banished, forlorn, and far from the beloved disciples? It is because the kingdom’s advance is not to be by might or by power but by the Spirit of God. It will be Christ’s resurrection power producing the ability to continue to abide in the Word, and drawing strength from fellowship with the risen Christ and seeing other Christians in the church as fellow sufferers for the truth that they could go on. John calls them “companions in tribulation”. The word for companions here means partners or partakers or fellow worshippers with him. We do receive great encouragement when we see Christ’s power at work in everyday people like ourselves to enable us to stand and continue to bear witness to the truth in “the evil day.”

**And then 3rdly and finally- Christ is the Alpha and Omega in building the patience of the saints.**

John is our “brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.” The patience of Jesus Christ is built into the lives of His saints. It is built into them by His Almighty power. It is by this means that they can wait for the triumphant outcome, and endure to the end knowing that they will be sustained by Christ’s own power and strength. They have the love of Christ to sustain them. The book of Romans has much to say about this. Consider chapter 5: 3-5. After talking about the believer’s being justified by faith, and the resulting peace between God and man, Paul says this: “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance (it is “patience” in

the King James) and perseverance, character ; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” We have the Alpha and Omega with us. He will control the beginning of our learning to bear suffering for His Name’s sake and He will bring it to a good issue, but it will be His love that sustains us in it and helps us to endure. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Tribulation produces endurance and perseverance that this leads more and more to proven character and hope. This Christ teaches us in His time and His way. And by His grace, He causes us to rejoice in it. The voice of the Lord Jesus is like a trumpet behind John to assert this powerful truth that He will orchestrate by His power everything that relates to our becoming faithful witnesses to Him in a world that wants to oppose Him and His kingdom’s advance. Don’t let your fears control you in relation to your faith but learn to pray and trust that He will order all for you. He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End.