



## ABOUT “Alpha & Omega”

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

~ Revelation 1:8

*Alpha & Omega* is the second series of Bible Studies especially written so that you can do them alone at home, or with others in a group. They don't depend on a leader or someone affirming the right answer. The title of this series comes from the introduction of John's letter to God's people, preparing them for the persecution and difficulty the Church of Christ was about to face. But it gives them (and us) two views of this: the seen reality of what God's people experience, and the unseen reality of God's glorious and gracious rule in Christ over all these events. They suffered, and we will suffer, but Christ rules even over the suffering ... and he is returning soon with saving victory for his Church!

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## INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION 1:1-8

This book is called “Revelation,” *not* “Revelations.” That is because, as John explains in the very first words of the book, this is “the” revelation (singular) about one Person (singular), and about what that Person is about to do (back then in the first century). There are lots of visions and events in the book – but they are all part of one revelation. There is a lot of confusion, fiction and simple stupidity surrounding the way this book is sometimes read, not the least caused by people who want to make it mainly about weird stuff they tell us is going to happen in the future ... “revelations” about different things. But John says it is a single revelation and its about what was going to happen then. Certainly, some things in the book are still to happen ... for example, Jesus is still to come again. So what he writes about bridges from John's day to the Second Coming in one revelation about Jesus and what he was *beginning* to do then, *continuing* to do now, and *will finish off* when he returns.

Another thing that sometimes makes this book hard to understand is that it uses a lot of symbolism. There are dozens of people and hundreds of books that will attempt to deceive you with “secrets” about the meanings of the various symbols. But here's the thing about biblical symbols: the *Bible* usually makes clear what the symbols mean. In Revelation, most of the symbols are actually very easy to understand for four reasons:

- a. John often explains what the symbol stands for;
- b. John uses symbols and metaphors he has already used in his Gospel (matching other New Testament writers);
- c. John is “revealing” stuff not hiding it: the symbols he uses make sense and are consistent throughout the letter;
- d. John is a Jew who knows and uses the Old Testament – especially, in this case, Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah. It's not a bad idea to have a quick read of Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah along with studying Revelation.

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# Alpha & Omega #1 Revelation 1:1-8

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## GETTING STARTED

Please remember that this is God's Word. God used John to write God's words in God's way for us. So

1. Pray, asking God to give you his Spirit so that you will honour him, understand his word, and learn how to live better for Jesus.
  2. Read the passage listed above for this study. What is it mainly about?
  3. Now discuss/think about/answer the questions that follow.
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## ANNOUNCING GOD'S MESSAGE ~ Revelation 1:1-3

Most New Testament letters begin in a way that was then traditional: a greeting to those the letter is addressed to and the name of the writer. This is different. This letter starts by telling us what it is about. When something in the Bible stands out as different, it normally signals something important. In fact verses 1-3, which tell us what the letter is about, tell us what the main message of the book is and why it is important for us to read it.

According to verse 1 ...

1. ... who or what is revealed in this book?
2. ... who has revealed this?
3. ... to whom has God revealed this?
4. ... when is what is being revealed going to happen?
5. ... how did the message get from God to those it was revealed to?
6. In verse 2, John says he "saw" this message. What that means will become clear later, but he stresses that he testifies to it ... it is true!  
**What two things are true?**

According to verse 3 ...

7. ... what three things to do with this letter will bring blessing from God?
  8. ... why will they bring blessing?
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## TWO THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- a. This study started by noting the importance of something different in this letter compared with other Bible letters. Given what the first three verses are about, what makes those verses *so* important? How should you respond to that?
  - b. The last of the three things in verse 3 that bring blessing is "taking to heart" what is read or listened to. What does it mean to "take to heart" and how will that show in you faith, your thoughts, your words, your life?
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# Alpha & Omega #1 Revelation 1:1-8

## **GOD'S GRACE, GOD'S LOVE, GOD'S PROMISE, GOD'S BEING ~ Revelation 1:4-8**

The John of verse 4, who is writing this letter, is John the Apostle. We'll get more details about him in the next study. He is writing to real people in real churches: we'll meet those churches too in a following study. But here John shows them God's eternal, almighty power in four key ideas about God's grace, love, promise and being:

9. Compare the grace announced in verse 4 with God's description of himself in verse 8, and in Exodus 3:14.  
**What are the three attributes of God with which he chooses to reveal himself in verse 4?**
  
10. **What are the three attributes with which God chooses to reveal Jesus in verse 5?**

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The "seven spirits before his (God's) throne" in verse 4 can be puzzling if you overlook the fact that in this book God uses lots of symbols. As you progresses through the study of Revelation, you will see that seven comes up repeatedly to signify perfection. Compare this description of the "seven spirits" with Zechariah 4:1-6. How many lamps represent the one Spirit of the Lord? In this context it is safe to understand the "seven spirits" to be a reference to the seven-fold (or perfect) Holy Spirit – after all, what other Spirit is before God's throne?

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11. **What are the two attributes with which God chooses to reveal the Holy Spirit in verse 4?**

12. In verses 5 and 6 the love of God causes John to exclaim glory to God.
  - a. **What two things has this love brought to God's people?**

- b. **What words express John's praise?**

13. According to verse 7

- a. **Who is coming?**

- b. **Who will see this coming?** (Is this a secret thing or a very public thing?)

- c. **Why will they mourn?**

14. Alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet and Omega is the last. **What does verse 8 reveal about God?**

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## **SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT**

15. **In the light of this passage: What can you thank God for? What can you pray for others? What can you trust God for?**

16. **In the light of this passage, what changes do you need to make: In your faith? In your worship? In your attitude? In your life?**