

So what is Alpha and Omega?

God is Life Itself and the Divine Source of the life in all he creates. In this sense he is the 'first' and the 'beginning' - the Alpha. But the Life that is God flows from the Divine through the spiritual world right down to the lowest, outermost and ultimate level of his creation - the physical world in which we live our daily lives. And it is this ultimate level of physical existence that is the 'last' or 'end' - the Omega.

Thus the meaning of God being Alpha and Omega is that God is completely in all things from the highest and inmost Divine, the 'first' and the 'beginning' to the lowest and outermost level of physical life, the 'last' and the 'end'. There is nothing which exists in which God is not.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." [Rev 22:13]

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Alpha and Omega

At the beginning of the Book of Revelation Jesus Christ describes himself with these words:

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” [Rev 1:8]

And then at the end of Revelation the theme is repeated twice:

And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.”
[Rev 21:6]

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” [Rev 22:13]

Why does the Lord Jesus Christ describe himself in these terms and what does it mean for us?

The words Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters in Greek, the original language of the New Testament which concludes with the Book of Revelation. And the use of these words is linked with ‘first’ and ‘last’, ‘beginning’ and ‘end’ and with the idea that the Lord ‘is’ and ‘was’ and ‘is to come’.

The Greek alphabet starts with alpha [α A] and ends with omega [ω Ω] and although our alphabet starts with the same letter ‘a’ it ends with a different letter ‘z’. We tend to use an expression like “from A to Z” to mean everything, or something that is complete. A similar sense is conveyed by linking alpha and omega together to give the idea of completeness - God is completely in all things.

Intriguingly the Old Testament includes a similar use of the first and last letters of the alphabet but in this case it is in Hebrew not Greek. Psalm 119 has 22 groups of verses starting with each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Thus Psalm 119 is in a sense a

complete and comprehensive statement of praise to God from Aleph [א] to Tav [ת], the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

But, returning to the Book of Revelation we need to consider in what way God, the Lord Jesus Christ, is ‘first’ and ‘last’ and the ‘beginning’ and ‘end’.

The most obvious meaning of these words is that they relate to time, after all the first book of the Bible, Genesis, begins with the words *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”*. So we could understand God as existing from the beginning of time to the end of time. We can also use words like first and last, beginning and end to refer to positions in space like, for example, when we are at the beginning of a journey or at the end. So we could also understand God as existing in all of space from its very beginning to its very end. In this way we tend to think of God in all time and all space because, as very physical beings, we find it difficult to think outside of time and space. Yet there are times when we experience a sense of ‘timelessness’ in this life. Think about those occasions when you are engrossed in doing something you love or are simply being with someone you love. Our sense then is that time doesn’t matter or even exist.



But there is a fundamental problem with thinking about God as ‘first and last’ and ‘beginning and end’ in terms of time and space. This is because we talk about God as being eternal and infinite. God is eternal and infinite not because he is in all time and in all space, as it seems to us, but because essentially he is outside of time and space. So whilst we may think of ‘first and last’ and ‘beginning and end’ as relating to space and time this would be a mistake and we would miss out on the truer and deeper meaning of these words.