

Session 04 Jesus as the First and the Last (Rev. 1:11, 17; 2:8)

I. JESUS AS THE FIRST AND THE LAST

- A. ***Review:*** In Revelation 1-3, John shares a vision which highlights 30 descriptions of Jesus' majesty, ministry, and personality, and 18 eternal rewards. Each description and reward communicates a specific insight about Jesus that is necessary in equipping the Church to overcome compromise, endure persecution, and engage in greater partnership with Him.
- B. The revelation of Jesus as the First and the Last is the title that Jesus used the most in Revelation. Jesus spoke of being the First and the Last four times (Rev. 1:11, 17; 2:8; 22:13). (The Alpha and Omega is used most when *combining* the statements made by both Jesus and the Father). He insisted three times that John write it down and communicate it to others (Rev. 1:11, 19; 2:8).
¹⁰I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, ¹¹saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it..." (Rev. 1:10-11)
- C. Jesus as the First and the Last emphasizes His ***sovereignty*** and ***preeminence*** over all as a Man. These truths about Him are deeply connected to the resurrection and His eternal rewards. The Father does not ever say He is the First and the Last in the book of Revelation. Therefore, we conclude that this title refers to Jesus' human destiny, power, and exaltation.
- D. Jesus used this title especially in context to His suffering, death, and resurrection as a Man (Rev. 1:17-18; 2:8). He used it to encourage others to not be afraid of persecution. Our view of death is rooted in eternity and in the knowledge that Jesus has authority over the realm of death.
¹⁷I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. ¹⁹Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place..." (Rev. 1:17-19)
- E. Jesus went through everything that humans go through and yet prevailed and received back everything that He lost in the natural by His obedience to God. He calls humans to endure the same pressures and persecutions as He did and to join Him in victory by keeping their eyes fixed on the hope of eternity.
- F. Each believer will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of what we did with what God gave us and to receive eternal rewards for it (1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10). Rewards express how Jesus feels about our love for Him and about working closely with Him in the age to come. There will be a difference in heavenly gifts and in the measure His people will experience of God's glory in heaven. Rewards will vary according to our obedience.
⁴¹There is one glory of the sun...and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. ⁴²So also is the resurrection of the dead. (1 Cor. 15:41-42)
¹⁷Our light affliction...is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things...not seen. (2 Cor. 4:17-18)

II. JESUS IS THE FIRST: THE SOURCE OF ALL THINGS

- A. Jesus is the ***first cause, the source of all things*** related to the salvation and destiny of humans. Jesus is the first source of all blessing and goodness (Jas. 1:17). Jesus is the first and the last word on love, power, wisdom, purpose, and salvation. He is the source of our money, ministry, and honor. One characteristic of David's life was that he looked to God as his source. The Lord can give anything to us and return anything that we lose because of obedience to Him. He has the final word on what we possess or lose. Men do not have the first or last word about our lives.
- B. Jesus is the first cause of our redemption and of us knowing God. He is the first and last savior and plan for the human race.
- C. Jesus as a Man has the ***first place of authority and honor*** over all things. Jesus has preeminence over all things with the primary position in the Church as its head. He is first in authority, honor, and dignity (1 Cor. 15:28; Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 5:12). When Jesus becomes our First, a new world opens up and a new fullness is within our reach.
¹⁸He is the head of the body...that in all things He may have the preeminence. (Col. 1:18)
- D. Jesus was the ***first to receive His resurrected body*** and eternal reward after being killed because of His obedience to God. He is the forerunner for the redeemed human race. He is the first and last of everything pertaining to the destiny of glorified humanity and the new creation. He was the first human to conquer all the enemies of the human race, including death (1 Cor. 15:24-28). He is the first fruits, the guarantee that God's plan for humans will work and cannot fail.
²⁶The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. (1 Cor. 15:26)

III. JESUS IS THE LAST: THE PURPOSE OF ALL THINGS

- A. Jesus is the ultimate purpose, goal, and reason for all things related to redeemed humanity. We can only find the fullness of our meaning in our relationship to Jesus. He brings the purpose of each believer to fullness (1 Thes. 5:24). There can be no improvement on His will.
⁶He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ... (Phil. 1:6)
- B. Our highest purpose in life is to love and worship Him and to partner with Him as His eternal companion. Glorifying Jesus in this way is not just a means to an end, it is an end in itself. Jesus is the goal, the end product of what God wants (Eph. 1:4; Rom. 8:29).
- C. Jesus has the last word on everything, including our very lives. He is never surprised. The end of God's plan for our life is in His hands. He sees the end of all things and can therefore assure us that all His promises will come to pass. Jesus sees the end of the story of our life and ministry.
¹⁰Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure..." (Isa. 46:10)
- D. Jesus has the last word on truth and on each person's life as the judge of the human race.

IV. SUMMARY OF JESUS AS THE FIRST AND THE LAST

- A. Jesus is the end product and goal of what God is after in redeemed humans. He is the author and finisher (perfecter) of everything related to the human experience of salvation (Heb. 12:2). He is our source of justification, sanctification, and glorification. Jesus is the source of salvation for our body, soul, spirit, circumstances, and ministry, and for the nations of the earth.

²Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. (Heb. 12:2)

- B. Jesus alone sees the whole picture. Some lose perspective in times of pressure, thinking that their trouble has no end to it and that what they lost is lost forever without any chance of recovery. Our trials have an end. Jesus is the first and last word on love, power, wisdom, and purpose.

V. APPLICATION OF JESUS AS THE FIRST AND THE LAST

- A. To the persecuted church at Smyrna, Jesus referred to Himself as, “The First and the Last, who was dead and came back to life.” He associated this title with His cruel suffering, death, and resurrection to encourage believers to not fear persecution. He understands human suffering because He experienced the worst that men can do and then triumphed over it. He is emphasizing His tender care and the practicality of believing in the truth about receiving eternal rewards.

⁸To the church in Smyrna write, “These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: ⁹‘I know your works, tribulation, and poverty...’¹⁰Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation...Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life...¹¹He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” (Rev. 2:8-11)

1. As the First and the Last, Jesus knows about our hard work because, as a Man, He worked very hard. He understands our pressures, or tribulations, with the many undeserved attacks His people receive because He received them too. He understands poverty, or lack of human resources, because He was born to a poor family.
 2. He exhorted them to not be afraid of the things they would suffer, knowing that some would go to prison and others would be killed. Jesus does not promise us that this life will be free of difficult circumstances. He promises to touch our heart and to return everything back to those who lose anything because of their obedience to Him.
 3. He possesses power over death and knows the way through it. He is alive forever. He sees suffering in light of the reality of eternity. Death and sin have no hold on us.
- B. Jesus experienced harsh and cruel sufferings. He knows what we are feeling. Many of His disciples, friends, and family turned away from Him (Jn. 6). He experienced all the pressures of being human. He knows rejection, ridicule, relational and economic loss, and physical pain. He experienced the worst that men could do socially, relationally, financially, and physically.

- C. Jesus sees the end of the story and assures us that there is something bigger going on. This emphasizes His care for those being persecuted. This revelation strengthens us to overcome fear.
- D. Whatever God has ordained for us will come to pass in this age and in the age to come. Some have lost money and ministry or relational opportunities because of their conviction about righteousness. Everything we lose because of our obedience will be returned.

²⁴*He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it. (1 Thes. 5:24)*

⁶*He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus... (Phil. 1:6)*

- E. Many are focused on Jesus as the First, but not as the Last—the final purpose or answer for their life, ministry, and endurance in pressure. Oh, to know Jesus as the First and the Last.

VI. THREE TITLES CONNECTED WITH “THE FIRST AND THE LAST” (REV. 1:5)

- A. Revelation 1:5 develops the implications of Jesus as the First and the Last. This covers three areas of Jesus’ human destiny, including His earthly ministry (faithful witness; in the past), His heavenly ministry (firstborn; in the present), and His millennial ministry (ruler; in the future). These titles point to His messianic roles as prophet (witness), priest (firstborn), and king (ruler).
⁵*Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever... (Rev. 1:5-6)*
- B. John presented the *preeminence of Jesus* (three expressions in v. 5), the *destiny of the redeemed* (priests and kings, v. 6), and the *dominion of the Father* on the earth forever (v. 6). Jesus is the first and last in all truth, the realm of the resurrection, and in the eternal government of the earth.
- C. Jesus is the faithful witness. This is the summary of His earthly life and ministry in what He said, did, and how He lived. He told the full truth about God, man, Israel, and the end times, etc. He was killed for telling the truth. Jesus revealed the truth and stood for it regardless of the cost. John emphasized Him as a witness of truth (Jn. 3:11; 5:31-32; 8:13-14; 8:18, 23; 18:37).
- D. **A-R-K**: We apply the truths about Jesus in Revelation to our lives in three ways:
 1. **Agreement**: Make declarations of agreement to Jesus as the First and the Last. Pray, “Jesus, You are the First and the Last. You are my source and reason for everything.”
 2. **Revelation**: Pray, “Reveal Yourself to me more as the First and the Last.”
 3. **Keep the prophecy**: Respond in faith and obedience to the specific truth of Jesus as the faithful witness. Pray, “I will commit to trust and obey Your excellent leadership as the First and the Last in all things. Empower me to walk this out consistently.”