

2023 Exodus 19 Romans 5 Alpha and Omega

At least three times in the book of Revelation God is referred to as the Alpha and the Omega. Which are, respectively, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. The illustration, I think, is clear: God is the beginning and the end, the eternal one. Beyond the space time continuum. Nothing before, nothing after. He is, as he has said, the I AM. The one who is, the one whose existence is essential. If I don't exist, things go on, if one of those stars doesn't exist, things go on, but if he doesn't exist, there is no existence.

This term, Alpha and Omega, I cannot help but note is given to Jesus in chapter one, lest we have any silly ideas that Jesus is not true God – no, he is first and last, the one who was dead but is now alive.

The reason I bring this up, is because I think fits nicely with our readings today. God is first.

We might think that isn't the case in our Old Testament lesson. We might read that big IF word in verse 5 and get a little worried. "Now therefore IF you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasure..." If. If! "So I guess it depends on us. We show our shiny goodness to him and THEN, after that, he will love us."

But that is not actually what the reading says. It says that FIRST, verse 4, “how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.” Who was the first, the alpha, when it comes to God’s relationship with Israel? Was it them with their awesome power and might and goodness? No, it was God. He started that relationship, by grace.

He called Abraham. He blessed the patriarchs. He brought them out of Egypt. And now he will set in stone, quite literally, his relationship with them at mount Sinai. But make no mistake – he is the first.

And we might say, “that is all well and good for Israel, but surely I must have to show some form of devotion, or acceptance, or repentance before the Lord will turn his eye and his blessings toward me!” But no, Paul doesn’t let us go there for ourselves either.

“For while we were still weak (like, before we polished ourselves up (as if we’ve done that real well even after being a Christian), at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.” Who is the first actor there? God yet again. And his sacrifice is not for the put-together and the beloved, as we see mothers and fathers dying for children to save them – which is beautiful, no doubt – But God dies for what again? The weak, the ungodly – un-godly! Those without him, those who do not know him or want him. He dies for them – such is his love.

And in case you still miss the point he continues, “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Who is the alpha? Who is the first mover? Who is the one who causes us to love because he first loved us? God in Christ.

He is the primary cause. He is the unmoved mover. He is the One who made creation, he is the One who, by his act of mercy has redeemed fallen creation. And while yes, sadly, tragically some ignore, reject, and spurn his love... well, but what about you? Is that you? Or is He the One who made you? And the one who, before you were even born, died for you that you may be his own. He is the one who, through water and Spirit and word has called and kept you in the faith. And you didn't have to muster up some feeling, or do X amount of good works for him to pay attention to you. No, not at all.

From the Cosmos, to you, God is the alpha. And he is the merciful one, who delights to give unworthy people like us – grace.

He is also the omega. Let us not forget.

Which is to say, he is the one who will gain the victory. He is the one with the authoritative last word. The evidence for this is clear at the resurrection. If the Alpha and Omega can control creation, and conquer death. Well, then what could we possibly use to argue with him? Or anyone else for that matter?

The devil can sit there night and day listing off every one of your sins, dragging them out, showing replays. Could you imagine how awful that would be? But he would still not get the last word. Jesus does. “Died for. Gone. Forgiven, acquitted.” We ourselves could, in fear, confess that “God I shirked your truth at times, I was scared, I was insincere.” And God responds, “but you are mine in faith – and the least in my kingdom are the greatest.” Which should give us such great confidence and relief that, if we realized how sure our salvation, and loving our God toward us, we would weep tears of joy. You don’t even realize how safe you are. And that says nothing about you, it says everything about God. Luther said, “When I look at myself I think, ‘how can I be saved?’ When I look at Jesus I think, ‘how can I not be?’”

And when that wonderful work of God to save is realized. Then, in response, hopefully, we can look back at the peoples response in Exodus and the confession of the Church, and maybe we can confess along with them, by the power of the Spirit, well, then, why wouldn’t we do ALL that he has commanded and said is right and good? He is strong, he is loving. Why would we seek to manipulate him “Oh, he will just forgive me anyway, I can do whatever I want!” What? That is how you respond to the Creator of the Stars, the redeemer of your life? Nonsense. No, God’s people stand and say together, “Let’s belong to him.” Amen! And then the Word of God then can inform us of what it looks like to strive and follow after

Jesus. The Word of the Lord endures forever, Not one letter of the law will pass away, the Lord teaches us. He gets the last word, his is the final word, why not seek after it? Who cares what the world says, who cares what they call us or do to us, do they get the last word? Is theirs nearly as good? No, God's Word – All that you have commanded, not most, not some, all. Speak it in love folks.

And when we fall short of it. Well, that brings us back around doesn't it. Does it bring us to "I'm too sinful and insincere for God to love me"? Does it bring us back to "He will surely condemn and hate me because of my sin"? Or does it bring us back around to, "While we were still sinners Christ died for us? How much more now that we have been justified will we be saved by his life!" It brings us there folks, back to the cross where we see a mighty but merciful God who loved us even when we didn't know him, why would he turn his back on us now? No, much more, much more Paul says, will his grace be for us now.

God is the alpha. The first. He has called us and saved us and loved us first. Our love, our response, is just that, a response. God is the Omega. The final authoritative undisputed Word. And He has a word for you: that. thanks to his work in Christ, you are his child, washed clean in his blood, forgiven, free, and an heir of an eternal inheritance and, judging by the power of the Alpha and Omega, I don't think it will disappoint.

Amen.