

Coach House Church

BEACONS

ALPHA AND OMEGA

5TH MAY 2021

Isn't it tempting to offer an opinion? It's like doing a car boot sale. Antique paintings go alongside plastic tractors and an exercise machine from 2007. Some things are valuable, some things are not, and it comes from what we've accumulated over the years. Everyone has opinions about God, but he presents himself to us in the Bible so we can see his work to save us from the beginning to the very end. However much we know about the world, we can always know more. Consider a subject you know lots about. Could be cars, films, football or in my case, how to throw a Frisbee very far. Now think about it more specifically: perhaps your first car, a favourite film, the football team you support – as you zoom in specifically, you'll know more about it. You probably don't just know when your team last won the league, but who played in the match, who scored, the scoreline, the number of shots on target and who got a yellow card. PhD's zoom in to the strangest and most minute details of a subject area to try and increase our knowledge about it. Research papers try to expand our knowledge in strange and outlandish directions from the effects of cocaine upon bees to whether or not woodpeckers get headaches (yes, these are real examples). Our opinions are always being reformed by experience and knowledge and we'll never know it all.

God is unique because unlike us, he created everything. There is nothing outside the scope of his knowledge. Technically, he could explain any process in an incomprehensible amount of detail on any subject (like whether or not woodpeckers get headaches). The Bible describes this aspect of God's character in profound ways which we can only touch on in this beacon, but I want to offer one way to kick us off.

Revelation 1:8 tells us this: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." The Greek alphabet begins with Alpha and ends with the letter Omega, and in the same way, God is

present from beginning to end. There is nothing that happens outside of his control or understanding. He is there at the beginning, middle and end of the story. He's got a plan for the world he created and he's there to see it through to the end. What does that mean for us, and is it good news? Romans 8:28 says: "...we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who[a] have been called according to his purpose." And a little later in verse 39 it confirms that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Ephesians 1:3-14 goes into even more detail about how even before the creation of the world, God destined believers to be adopted into God's family and encounter his love (but in much more profound detail than that). God is master over creation, and his intentions for us are always good if we are seeking to follow his ways.

We see God's plans unfold to save humanity from the beginning of the Bible all the way to the end. through his grace to Adam and Eve in their sin, his mercy to Noah in the flood, his promises to Abraham and all the way up to Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection, the beginnings of the church, church history to the present day and then on to the end whenever it comes.

Before I began reading Revelation this week, I first read through the short letter of Jude that comes just before it. It is one chapter long, and the vast majority condemns people who were abusing the faith as a "licence for immorality" (1:4) living according to their basic instincts (1:10) who were divisive and without the spirit (1:19). Colourful language describes how they are like twice uprooted trees with no fruit or life, like faint stars wandering off in the blackest darkness, or clouds without the benefit of rain. At first it looks like a letter written in panic, seeing how people had even snuck into the church and were abusing it. How could God be in control? Why was he allowing this to happen? How were true believers to live with the mess of it all?

Jude says this: 20 But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. They were to remain in God's love by building upon the faith they had and praying according to the desires of God's Holy Spirit. In other words, simply living as Christians who were distinct from the actions of those who did not really believe. It struck me that Jude was so calm in his solution to these problems after describing them so severely. His confidence seems to be rooted in God's control over everything. God is the Alpha and Omega. He enables us to have faith. He established the church. He is clearly in control.

It is tempting to despair or be alarmed at ourselves, the church, or events in the world, but understanding that God is in full control with fully good intentions enables us to find peace. We can be satisfied because however bad things get, God always has the last word, and nothing takes him by surprise. I hope this helps you turn to God with hope, whatever situations you are facing or contemplating in life at the moment.

I will end with these final words from the letter of Jude which celebrates God's ability to save us to the very end, no matter what: "24 To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— 25 to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen"



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