



"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end," says the Lord (Revelation 22:13). The deceptive simplicity of this statement belies vast meaning beneath it. At the beginning, the VERY beginning (in fact before the beginning, if we want to get philosophical), God was there, brooding over the watery chaos. Our story starts in Genesis with God on stage, so to speak, the primary character in the drama of creation. With a few mere words, "Let there be light!" existence bursts into reality.

Then the story turns with the creation of humankind and though God is always there, God steps out of the front and center scene; and people become the main players on the biblical stage for the rest of scripture. Even in the New Testament, Jesus, God made in the flesh, is presented more human than divine.

But in this last chapter of all scripture, things have come full circle, for God is once again front and center giving the *heilsgeschichte* of scripture – the salvation history, fitting bookends to God's plan.

It is the end of the story and as in any ending we find something of the essence of the whole compacted into the final sentences. *"Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen."* (Revelation 22:21)

Other formidable endings resonate with similar power. Listen to these great literary conclusions:

"It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known." *A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens

"Max stepped into his private boat and waved goodbye and sailed back over a year and in and out of weeks and through a day and into the night of his very own room where he found his supper waiting for him—and it was still hot." *Where the Wild Things Are*, Maurice Sendak

"But I don't think us feel old at all. And us so happy. Matter of fact, I think this the youngest us ever felt." *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker

"How wonderful the flavor, the aroma of her kitchen, her stories as she prepared the meal, her Christmas Rolls! I don't know why mine never turn out like hers, or why my tears flow so freely when I prepare them - perhaps I am as sensitive to onions as Tita, my great-aunt, who will go on living as long as there is someone who cooks her recipes." *Like Water for Chocolate*, Laura Esquivel

"There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved." Origin of Species, Charles Darwin

The last two chapters of Revelation ties a bow on the knot of scripture, this like no other story possibly can, for it tells the end of the story, the only story there has ever been, the greatest story ever told; and the very end is the most pregnant word in all literature—"Amen!" Amen has it all in it, especially if you read the Bible from cover to cover and all that has come before it.

If you just read these last two chapters of Revelation one might be forgiven for seeing this as fluff; as overly optimistic denial; but before this basically all the worst and hardest stuff in history!! The Four Horsemen; the Beast, the Red Dragon, the Antichrist; stars falling from heaven; creation literally falling apart!

In this "Amen," is all of God's plan being brought to consummation.

It is the plan of God hatched in heaven at the Fall...

...in the call of Sarah and Abraham

...in the drive of Joseph to keep the family alive

...in the scourge of the prophet's pen to call people to account

...in the blessed courage of Mary

...in the joy of Zechariah.

In the life of Jesus,

...all He gave up

...His torturous death on the cross

...the disciples bumbling it.

All those threads find their resolution in the final chord of creation; every note ever played, every life ever lived; every sacrifice and pain; all summed up in this final "Amen"; the amen of all encapsulations!

Handel does an outstanding job setting to music the final "Amen!", *so be it* in scripture.

In fact, I believe you can hear both the *Amen* of creation in Genesis and the *Amen* of its consummation in Revelation. With its simplicity of text, *Amen* is the only word in it, the endless layering, which feels like an infinity loop sounds, like the voice of The Divine, exerting the inexorable will of God onto history.

It is ironic, that Darwin, the atheist, seemed to understand its supreme beauty in his conclusion of the *Origin of Species*, "...from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful!"

All those endless forms of human creativity are found in this *Amen*! It is the voice of God's endless joy of it all.

The voyages across the oceans of the Polynesian people...

...the shaping of flint for fire

...the planting of wheat

....the taming of wolves
....the building of cities
....all that spark of fire is in this *Amen*.

The industrial revolution,
....the rise of technology
....the voyage into space.

They are in there.

It is the *Amen* of the fight for rights and justice of Koreans, African Americans, and Jews. Their story too is resolved in this final note of history.

In music it can almost be painful to wait for a cord to be resolved and when it does it brings a sense of satisfaction and relief; that is this *Amen*! The waiting by God and humanity has been painful, frustrating, and confusing but it is all perfected in the *Amen*.

When have you finished something of gargantuan work; put the pen down; closed the laptop; hung up the phone; crunched the algorithm, you just...knew.

You knew it was fabulous and final and perfect and grand and impactful for you; your family and for others; the thrill and the satisfaction are immense.

You have felt a measure of it. I am sure. When you made the team after excruciating exercise routine. When your practice paid off and you finally had perfected the dance for the recital. When the business deal you agonized over for years was signed and the check deposited, when the child was born that you

waited for so long to be delivered. You knew the power of the *Amen* in that moment.

All that striving; all that sacrifice, all the agony and all the joy...was known in that moment. And relief, and joy, and love permeated through.

This is the end, the very end...

God is the beginning and end of ALL THINGS; every beginning and every ending ultimately finds its resolution in the God of alpha and omega!!

I have shared with you before my fascination with the *Nuremberg Chronicle*; from the 1400s – one of the earliest printed books! It purported to be a history of the world. Beginning by retelling the biblical story. After Jesus' life it then continued by adding the history of the Western World up to the time of its writing. Next were blank pages, (only a handful) to add untold tales of human endeavors. And then it concluded by ending the history of the world with the retelling of Revelation!

When the final "*Amen*", of John's pen was written, it was in a sense a quote from God declaring the end of history. Until then we are filling the blank pages of the *Nuremberg Chronicle* with our stories and actions. Let's do things worthy of being added to the book!

And so, the enthusiasm of John's pen is palpable, "*Amen! Come Lord Jesus.*"

Because he has seen the final act of history in his vision.

The grand city so large it can hold EVERYONE;

...beautiful and resplendent

...a tree of life

...water of life

...the purging of all sorrow, all loss

...the presence of God like a light

...the city of welcome, for the gates are never shut

...the healing OF ALL ILLS

...the river of life flowing from throne and the lamb.

What an ending. And one final, great literary ending, *"I ran with the wind blowing in my face, and a smile as wide as the valley of Panjsher on my lips. I ran."* *The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini

Come, Lord Jesus; o yes, Jesus, come; for we need you now; it feels like now more than ever before. But until He does come, let us run the race to the end, with the Spirit of God's wind in our face, and at our backs, as it was in the beginning, and shall be evermore. Amen!!!