

**“Faith Matters” # 24 – The First and the Last – November 12, 2017**

One of the self-given identities of God is “the First and the Last”. We might be puzzled that God is often identified as a rock or a fortress, but there’s no mystery about the First and the Last. There was no previous god, and will be no later one. We read in the final book of the Bible, “I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God”. And then comes a very trinitarian reference to time past, present, and future; that is, the God “who was, and who is, and who is to come.”<sup>1</sup>

It may surprise us that Jesus also claimed that very exalted identity for himself. In that same final book, the Revelation, John has a terrifying vision of Jesus who says, “Do not be afraid, I am the first and the last, and the living one – I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever.”<sup>2</sup> Later, Jesus repeats, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”<sup>3</sup>

To say that God is the First is to say that God was there before the creation of the universe. To say that **Jesus** is the first helps us understand the opening verses of John’s gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God” – now hear this! – “All things came into being through him”<sup>4</sup> – that is through Jesus, the living Word.

Well, if that is not enough to persuade us that Jesus is part of the Trinity God, listen to what happens when God called Moses. “Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the Israelites and say to them, “The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses... “Thus shall you say to the Israelites, ‘I AM’ has sent me to you.” I AM is a powerful name for God. Now fast forward to the New Testament and hear Jesus say to the Temple authorities: “Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day....” Then the Jews said to him, “You are not yet 50 years old, and have you seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I AM.”<sup>5</sup> Jesus used God’s name for himself. They considered this blasphemy and picked up stones to kill him.

Two names for Jesus and God: “I AM”, and “the First & the Last” – names to help you say “I am”, and “I am loved from first to last”.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. 1:8. <sup>2</sup> 1:17<sup>f</sup> <sup>3</sup> 22:13 <sup>4</sup> John 1:1-3 <sup>5</sup> John 8:56<sup>ff</sup>