

Jesus, the Divine Emperor (Solemnity of Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, Year B)

Revelation 1:5-8 Jesus Christ, the Alpha and the Omega

⁵ Jesus Christ [is] *the faithful witness*, the first-born of the dead, and *the ruler of kings on earth*. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶ and *made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father*, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. ⁷ Behold, *he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him*, every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. ⁸ “*I am the Alpha and the Omega*,” says the Lord God, *who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty*.” (Revelation 1:5-8)

1. Death & Resurrection: “witness” (Greek *martys*) and “first-born of the dead” (1:5)
2. Jesus the Emperor: “rule of kings on earth” (1:5; *not* a common modern title for Jesus!)
[T]hey will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is *Lord of lords and King of kings*... (Rev 17:14)

This is a copy of the letter which *King Artaxerxes* gave to Ezra the priest... “Artaxerxes, *king of kings*, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven. (Ezra 7:11-12)

3. Second Coming: “he is coming with the clouds” (1:7)
¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is *The Word of God*. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ *On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords*. (Rev 19:16)

4. Alpha = A first letter of the Greek alphabet
5. Omega = O last letter of the Greek alphabet

¹² Behold, *I am coming soon*, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done. ¹³ *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end*. (Rev 22:12-13)

The Living Tradition

Bede the Venerable: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” (Rev

1:8). He is the Beginning whom *no one precedes*; he is the End whom no one in the kingdom succeeds... “I am the first and the last” (Rev 1:17). He is the first because “*all things were made through him*” (John 1:3). He is the last because *all things are restored in him*. (Bede, *Commentary on Revelation* 1:8; 1:17; trans. W. C. Weinrich)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (Solemnity of Christ the King, Year B)

1. Do you usually think of Jesus Christ as “emperor” or “ruler of kings of the earth”? If not, why not? What are the implications of recognizing the *kingship* of Jesus Christ?

For Further Reading

1. Peter S. Williamson. *Revelation*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2015.
2. Margaret Froelich. *Jesus and the Empire of God: Royal Language and Imperial Ideology in the Gospel of Mark*. Library of New Testament Studies 653. London: T&T Clark, 2021.