Alpha and Omega

Fall Quarter: The Sovereignty of God
Unit 3: Alpha and Omega

Sunday school lesson for the week of November 27, 2016
By Rev. Earnestine Campbell

Lesson scripture: Revelation 22:12-21
Background scripture: Revelation 22:8-21

Key Verse: I am the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. (Revelation 22:13)

Purpose: To exalt Christ as the alpha and omega of God’s creation

Hearing the Word

The Adult Bible Studies Fall 2016, The Sovereignty of God author begins with entering into the final lesson in the sovereignty of God. We see from reading the introduction that the author calls this section the “Epilogue” and that it begins in Revelation 22:6. The author helps us with the structure of the epilogue and identifies the characters and says, “One of the features of this epilogue is the different speakers. At times the speaker is the guiding angel of 17:1. Also, Christ speaks a few times, as does the author himself.”

Revelation 22:8-11: Exalting Christ

The author identifies the author of the text as John (1:9), and it is on the island of Patmos where the vision begins and ends. John’s adoration to the angel that guides him turns into an act of worship by him “falling down.” (See Chapters 4-20 for more references). In vs. 9 we see that the angel rebukes John for his attempt to worship him. The scripture in John 4:24 teaches us that “God is a spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” The angel identifies himself as only a “fellow-servant,” and that worship is for God alone. I believe that we are all followers and servants of God, regardless of our position, status and call. The Adult Bible Studies author defines the word “servant” in Greek as doulos (DOO-loss), which means, “slave” and that the “servant/slave” is one who is devoted to the interests of the other while disregarding his own interests. As servants of God, we must be selfless and put God’s interests first.

Revelation 22:12-15: Alpha and Omega

In these verses, the author identifies the speaker in verses 12-13 as Jesus Christ, the Lamb. The author tells us that the phrase “Look! I am coming soon,” is a repeat of verse 7 and that “John reiterates the nearness of Christ’s coming and the promise of the
judgment of persons according to their actions.” The text reminds us to prepare ourselves for Christ’s return. We must empty our lives of things that are not righteous living according to God’s command. The author defines the meaning of the key Verse 13, “Alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet, and Omega is the final letter. Each of the two following phrases (‘the first and the last,’ ‘the beginning and the end’) underlines and amplifies that Jesus Christ was at creation’s beginning and will be present at its completion.” The author further tells us that “Verse 14 is the seventh and final beatitude in the Book of Revelation and that the number seven represents completeness or fullness in Revelation (and other apocalypses). Within John’s vision are seven letters to churches, seven seals, seven bowls, and seven trumpets.” Throughout the Bible, we see various numbers represented as symbolic significances in God’s actions, power, and miraculous works.

Revelation 22:16-21: The Final Benediction

We continue to explore these last verses through the lead of the author of the Adult Bible Study. The author expounds, paraphrasing, on Verse 17 by explaining that prayer is indicative of the immediate coming of Christ. Here, quoting the author’s classification of imagery descriptions, states, “In 21:2, ‘the bride’ was used as a metaphor for the New Jerusalem descending from heaven. In 21:9, the bride is referred to as ‘the Lamb’s wife,’ a symbol for the church. Here, the bride is also a symbol for the faithful followers of Christ. Verses 18-19 pronounce a serious curse on anyone who might consider altering ‘the words of the prophecy contained in this scroll’ (verse 18).” The author says that “John, using a warning from Moses in Deuteronomy 4:2: ‘Don’t add anything to the word that I am commanding you and don’t take anything away from it. Instead, keep the commands of the Lord your God that I am commanding all of you.’” The author makes clear that the caution is not about the modification of the words, but about remaining faithful to the message of the words. The author tells us in Verse 20, paraphrasing, that John quotes Jesus by repeating the same assurances found in verses 7 and 12. The author says, “Jesus’ imminent coming is a central theme of Revelation” and tells us in Verse 21; “it serves as a final benediction for John’s vision and that the concluding benediction is directed toward ‘all the saints.’” (NRSV).

Reflection

Teachers, as we conclude, take the time to have students think about these last lessons in Revelation and share their thoughts.

Closing prayer

As we conclude, let us remember all that we learned during our time to together in the study of your Word. We are thankful for your steadfast love towards us and the sacrifice
that your son, Jesus Christ, made for us. Let us remember to live righteously. “Let’s go and make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” Amen.

Rev. Earnestine W. Campbell is the Associate Director, Office of Connectional Ministries. You may contact her at earnestine@sgaumc.com.

All quotes and paraphrases are from Jan Turrentine, Adult Bible Studies Fall 2016, The Sovereignty of God (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2016), pgs. 121-124)