

## Isaiah 44:6-8 THE FIRST AND THE LAST

Good morning and Merry Christmas! I know you have a lot of places to choose from to worship and we're grateful you're here with us.

This morning as we kickoff Christmas week, we're gonna be in the book of Isaiah, so would you please turn in your Bibles to Isaiah 44? Isaiah 44:6-8 is going to be the basis of our text this morning, but we'll also be spending some time in the book of Revelation.

Amidst the planning, and shopping, and baking and cooking, wrapping, and unwrapping that's going to unfold over the next few days, I'm confident that a church body like this will do all those things while remembering that Jesus is the reason for the season.

But this morning I want us to think about Jesus in a different way, consider Him in a different light.

The prophecies of the birth of Jesus don't only focus upon the baby in the manger. Oftentimes in those prophecies there are attributes of Jesus that are overlooked. So, in light of celebrating the birth of our Savior, we're going to look at scriptures that remind us of the greatness of Christ.

ISAIAH 44:6-8 "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel,  
And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:  
'I am the First and I am the Last;  
Besides Me there is no God.

7 And who can proclaim as I do?  
Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me,  
Since I appointed the ancient people.  
And the things that are coming and shall come,  
Let them show these to them.  
8 Do not fear, nor be afraid;  
Have I not told you from that time, and declared it?  
You are My witnesses.  
Is there a God besides Me?  
Indeed there is no other Rock;  
I know not one.' ”

The title of this mornings message is THE FIRST AND THE LAST  
Let's pray

It's hard to believe the year 2025 is coming to a close isn't it? It's wild how time flies, and seems to go faster each year!

Just think of what's happened in our world in the last 26 years!

**SHOW PICS**

- Anyone remember Y2K?
- Of course none of us will ever forget 9/11
- Or the resulting war on terrorism that really has no end in sight
- In the last qtr century the internets capabilities and access has exploded. No longer are we using dial up modems, our phones have more power than the strongest computers did 25 years ago.
- Of course there was the great recession in 2008, **CLOSE PIC**

We've seen incredible advances in medicine, indescribable natural disasters, it's all just too much to even contemplate what

has unfolded in the last 25 years. Yet we know, through it all, Jesus was there.

Think for a moment about what was happening 250 years ago?

**SHOW PIC** Imagine, living in the American colonies while people debated and prepared for a revolution from Britain **CLOSE PIC**  
There's a lot that we don't know back in that time period, but we know 1 thing for sure-Jesus was there

Think back still further, 3000 years, and watch King David lead Israel's troops into battle with the Philistines. Or go further back in time, to the tower of Babel - or the flood of Noah's day - or Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

In Genesis 1:1 the Bible begins, but Jesus didn't. We're told,  
**Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."** With our finite minds we can't truly picture that opening scene. There's so much we don't know. But we know Who was there. In v 6 of Is 44 it reminds us **Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel,**  
**And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:**  
**'I am the First and I am the Last;**  
**Besides Me there is no God.**

Jesus is the First.

Notice v6 also says He is the the last.

Let's take the opposite perspective-how far into the future can you imagine? If the Lord tarries how many technological marvels await us? How will politics change us? What's gonna happen to America? What kind of world will our children inherit?

As Christians we're looking for the physical return of Jesus. He's promised to return for us. No one knows the day or hour, but we hope it's soon!

And we know from our Bibles that after Jesus raptures the church, dark days await. Severe, earth-shaking judgments rain down on Earth. The Bible then declares a coming Kingdom. God's promise to David will finally be fulfilled. Jesus the Messiah, reigns forever and time melts into eternity.

The final frame in the Bible's prophetic picture is what it calls "a new heaven and a new earth." And guess who'll be its king?... Jesus is the Last.

So put it together, Jesus is the First and He is the Last. Before time began Jesus was. After time expires, Jesus will be.

The Hebrew Prophet Micah wrote around 740 BC, and Micah saw the Baby of Bethlehem in this very light. Micah starts by predicting Messiah's birthplace. In **Micah 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem**

**Ephrathah,**

**Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,**

**Yet out of you shall come forth to Me**

**The One to be Ruler in Israel,**

**Whose goings forth are from of old,**

From everlasting.”

Of the numerous villages that dotted the Judean countryside, God picked tiny and obscure Bethlehem. We love this verse in Christmas time don't?

Yet what's most revealing about Micah's prophecy that often gets overlooked is that Bethlehem was not Jesus' beginning.

He writes, **Whose goings forth are from of old,  
From everlasting.”**

This word “everlasting” means, “from eternity on.” Some folks translate it, “beyond the vanishing point.” As we tried to do earlier, the idea is to go in your mind either backward or forwards as far as you can - 5000 years, 5 billion, 50 trillion-quintillion years - there's Jesus.

**Psalm 90:2 Before the mountains were brought forth,  
Or ever You had formed the earth and the world,  
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.**

Here's the wonderment of Christmas. The Baby of Bethlehem and the Eternal God are one in the same. The Ancient of Days became a Child of Time. Jesus is God - the first and last. Which leads us to our text this morning...

Isaiah 44 was written to a people who were swimming in a sea of idolatry. And Isaiah throws them a lifeline. Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, is the one, true God.

He tells them, 6 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel,  
And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:  
'I am the First and I am the Last;  
Besides Me there is no God.

The God of Israel is the one and only true God! God Himself declares, "I am the First and I am the Last."

Would you now please turn to Revelation 1?

Four times in the last book of the Bible, the Revelation of Jesus, our Lord is referred to by the same terminology we find here in our text of Isaiah 44. 4 times Jesus calls Himself "the First and the Last."

We're gonna read the 1st 2 of the 4 times here in revelation 1-10-18

Revelation 1 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, 11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and,[fn] "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia:[fn] to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white

as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; 15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; 16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. 17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me,[fn] “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.” 18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

Notice Jesus says in v17 ‘Do not be afraid: I am the First and the Last.’ That name was meant to comfort. Remember, John hadn’t seen Jesus for half-a century, not since Jesus had ascended to heaven.

During his time with Jesus, John had learned so much. The love of Jesus had won his heart. Jesus’ humility, service, and sacrifice showed John a better way.

But believers, including John, were suffering. The Church had been waiting for His return, but it hasn’t happened yet? Has His time away caused Jesus’ purposes to fail?

The Revelation of Jesus answers these questions with a resounding “no!” Jesus is the first and the last - and no matter how long a wait there is in between - nothing about Jesus diminishes. He is the only faithful God!

Hey, what Jesus starts He always finishes.

This name of first and the last assured John. It comforted John because it reminded him that Jesus has not failed. Jesus is as sovereign now, in heaven, as He was on the Galilee the day He calmed the sea.

Remember, Jesus is the first, the originator - but He is also the last, the culminator.

All that Jesus promises He'll bring to pass. Which reminds us that we can trust in the promises of Jesus.

You know, every promise involves a wait. **SHOW PIC** Promises are like seeds. Sown in one season, they're reaped in another.

**CLOSE PIC**

The giving and the receiving of a promise is always separated by an in-between-time, an in-the-meantime. And that in between place is where we insert faith.

All Jesus asks of us is faith, but faith is what He asks. How's your faith this morning? Are you trusting in Jesus?

In Revelation 1 Jesus laid His hand on John to give John assurance. Jesus will lay His hand on our hearts when we need the same assurance.

The 3rd time this name the First and the Last appears is in Revelation 2, so please turn there. Here Jesus is addressing the persecuted church of Smyrna, when Jesus again introduces Himself, 8 **"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write,**



**‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:**

Here Jesus is speaking to believers threatened by prison, by poverty, by suffering, even death. Yet Jesus has already conquered the worst that could happen to them. He’s the One “who was dead and came to life.”

Jesus assures their trembling hearts in Smyrna. Jesus was there when they first said “yes” to follow Him. Jesus will be there when they take their last breath. He’s their first and last.

And when your world is falling apart,, when everything around you is in turmoil. When you question the past and fear for the future, remember Jesus is first in line to help you. And He’ll be last by your side when everyone else forsakes or forgets about you.

Jesus is our first and our last. Jesus has already conquered the very worst that will ever happen to you.

Now the last time this name first and the last is mentioned is in the final chapter, so please turn to Revelation 22.

Realize, this is one of the last portraits of Himself Jesus leaves to His Church. These are words He wants to impress upon our hearts, to leave a mark.

Here’s how Jesus is to be thought of, not just during Christmas, but every day.

12-13

Revelation 22 12 “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last

Alpha was the first letter in the Greek alphabet, and Omega was the last. It’s like us saying, “Jesus is the A to Z.” The implication is that Jesus is not only the beginning and the end, but Jesus is also everything in between.

Now please turn back in your Bibles to Isaiah 44.

This Christmas, as we reflect upon the birth of Jesus, let’s not forget that Jesus strides across time. One foot is planted firmly before the beginning. One foot dominates the end of all things. And Jesus oversees everything in between.

In this morning’s text, Isaiah tells us that Jesus likes to reveal Himself by telling the end from the beginning. Note verse 7, **And who can proclaim as I do?**

**Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me,  
Since I appointed the ancient people.  
And the things that are coming and shall come,  
Let them show these to them.**

The God who is “the first and the last,” proves He is, by predicting future events. Divine prophecy is evidence of Jesus’ supremacy and sovereignty over all things.

When we say that “Jesus is eternal” it’s not that we’re saying He has lots of time, as much as He dwells outside of time altogether.

**SHOW PIC** Einstein proved that time is a physical property relative to other physical properties like space, matter, energy.

**CLOSE PIC**

So just as God is greater than matter or energy, He is also superior to time. He dwells outside of our time domain. This is how He is simultaneously both first and last.

And it’s from this perch, outside of time, that God sees the end of things from their beginning.

In fact, the next chapter, Isaiah 45, lays out one of the boldest predictions in all the Bible. God, through Isaiah, mentions by name a future ruler who’ll conquer Babylon, and permit the Jews to return to their promised land. God foretells the rise of a Persian king named Cyrus. It’s an amazingly detailed and specific prophecy.

But what’s most important is what this teaches us about Jesus. Our Lord was there in your past. He’s here in your present. And He’ll be there in your future, whatever may unfold. Call upon His name, for Jesus is “the first and the last.”

And I think this is a great passage to contemplate as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, and the New Year approaches. Is Jesus our first and our last?

Remember, Jesus is the first- in time, in order, in rank, in every way. But perhaps most importantly, Jesus is first in example. He's modeled how God wants us to do life.

**SHOW SLIDE** Jesus was dependent upon God and focused on others. **CLOSE SLIDE**

Think about Jesus' life. Jesus was humble. Rather than intimidate people, He felt their hurts. He showed He cared, and spoke the truth.

Of course Jesus also extended amazing grace. He was lavish with His forgiveness. Those are qualities needed year around, but especially around Christmas aren't they?

And here's the will of God for us-to live the same way! Jesus is "the first..." and we're to follow His pattern.

Since Jesus is the last, are we looking to bring Him glory? Are we living our lives with eternity in mind?

Wouldn't it be great, if we finished this year with one simple goal. To make Jesus our first and our last? To do everything with His story and His glory in mind?

I love what AW Tozer once said, **SHOW SLIDE** "Man in the plan of God has been granted considerable say; but never is he permitted to utter the first word nor the last. That is the prerogative of the Deity, and one which He will never surrender to His creatures." **CLOSE PIC**

Is Jesus the first and last of our affections? There's a warning we have to be mindful of in **Revelation 2:4** it was the church at Ephesus that had the tragic review. **"Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love."**

Their love for Jesus chilled. It grew cold.

Don't you want your last love for Jesus to be as passionate as your first?

If Christmas is becoming routine, if Christmas has become more about fighting traffic and finding sales, and stressing over family get-togethers, then right now, today, let's fan the flame! Let's make Jesus the first and last of our heart's affections.

Let me close by reading again the rhetorical question posed in Isaiah 44:8. Jesus asks it to answer it. **8 Is there a God besides Me?**

**Indeed there is no other Rock;  
I know not one.'** "

Jesus is the mighty rock. Weather and time have done nothing to erode His strength or weaken His promises. Lean on Him and He will never let you down. Let's make Jesus our first and our last.

Model His story! Live for His glory!

**BAPTISM**