

The phrase "**I am the First and the Last**" is found in the Book of Revelation, spoken by Jesus. Trinitarians argue that this statement identifies Jesus as God because a similar phrase is used by Yahweh in the Old Testament. However, Unitarian scholars challenge this interpretation by focusing on **context, translation, and biblical consistency**. This document explores the best non-Trinitarian arguments for understanding Jesus' statement in a way that aligns with biblical monotheism.

## 1. The Old Testament Context: Who Said It and What Did It Mean?

The phrase originates from Isaiah, where **Yahweh alone** declares:

### Isaiah 44:6 (Greek LXX)

*"Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God.'"* (Εγώ εἰμι πρῶτος καὶ ἐγὼ μετὰ ταῦτα, καὶ πλὴν ἐμοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν θεός.)

### Isaiah 48:12 (Greek LXX)

*"Listen to me, Jacob, and Israel whom I called: I am He; I am the first and I am the last."* (Ἐγὼ εἰμι πρῶτος, καὶ ἐγὼ εἰμι ὕστερος.)

- In Isaiah, "First and Last" refers to Yahweh's supremacy as the only true God.
- Yahweh is declaring His sovereignty over history—He was present before all things and will remain beyond all things.
- This phrase is used to **emphasize monotheism**—*"besides me, there is no God."*
- If Jesus meant this phrase in the same way, he would be claiming to be Yahweh **alone**, which contradicts his own distinction from the Father in many other passages.

**Conclusion:** The Old Testament meaning of "First and Last" does not mean being part of a Trinity. Instead, it emphasizes **God's supreme authority**, not a divine essence.

## 2. Jesus' Use of the Phrase in Revelation

Jesus uses this phrase in Revelation multiple times:

### Revelation 1:17-18 (Greek Textus Receptus)

*"Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last, and the Living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."* (Μὴ φοβοῦ· ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, καὶ ὁ ζῶν, καὶ ἐγενόμην νεκρὸς, καὶ ἰδοὺ ζῶν εἰμι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, καὶ ἔχω τὰς κλεῖς τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τοῦ ᾗδου.)

### Revelation 2:8 (Greek Textus Receptus)

*"These things says the First and the Last, who became dead and lived."* (Τάδε λέγει ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ὃς ἐγενήθη νεκρὸς καὶ ἔζησεν.)

### Revelation 22:13 (Greek Textus Receptus)

*"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."* (Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ Ἀλφά καὶ τὸ Ὠ, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος.)

- Jesus adds an important distinction: **"I became dead, and behold I am alive."**
- Yahweh, by nature, **cannot die** (1 Timothy 6:16 – *"who alone has immortality"*)—yet Jesus did die.
- This means Jesus is using the phrase **differently from Isaiah**, or else it would contradict Yahweh's own nature.

**Conclusion:** Jesus is **not** claiming to be Yahweh, but rather using the phrase to mean he is the first and last **in a different sense**, specifically in his role in God's salvation plan.

## 3. What Does "First and Last" Mean in Jesus' Context?

Instead of signifying **absolute divinity**, "First and Last" in Jesus' usage is best understood **in a Messianic context**:

- Jesus is **the first and last in God's redemptive plan**. He was foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20) and will rule as King of God's Kingdom until the end (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).
- Jesus is **the firstborn from the dead** (Colossians 1:18) and **the author and finisher of our faith** (Hebrews 12:2).
- His resurrection makes him **the first** (pioneer) of eternal life and the **last** (final ruler of the Kingdom).

**Conclusion:** "First and Last" is about Jesus' authority in salvation, **not** about being Yahweh.

## 4. Jesus' Authority to Bear the Name of YHWH

Jesus can also use this phrase because **he has been given the authorized possession of the name of YHWH**. There is a precedent in Scripture where an angel carries God's name and thus speaks as YHWH:

### Exodus 23:20-21 (Greek LXX)

*"Behold, I send My Angel before you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that*

*I have prepared. Be careful before him and obey his voice; do not provoke him, for he will not forgive your sins, for My name is in him.*" (Ἴδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου προπρόσωπόν σου...)

- This angel carries divine authority because **God's name is in him**, but he is not Yahweh Himself.
- Similarly, **the Angel of the Lord** in several passages speaks as Yahweh and is identified as Yahweh but is distinct from the Most High God.
- Jesus, being given all authority by the Father (**Matthew 28:18**), can bear the divine title **without being Yahweh Himself**.

**Conclusion:** Jesus speaks as "First and Last" in an authorized sense, similar to how God's angel could speak as YHWH while remaining distinct from Him