

The Great Amen

“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.” (Revelation 22:21, ESV)

Above is the last verse in the Bible. The word “Amen” is the last word of that last verse. Have you ever wondered why some people say “Amen” and some do not? Perhaps it is because some want to ensure they are using the word correctly. Writer Whitley Strieber once erroneously insisted the following: “Everytime someone ends a prayer in the Western world they say Amen; that is the name of an Egyptian god associated with completion. So we're still praying to their gods.” Strieber, intentionally or not, confused the Hebrew word “Amen” with “Amon” of Egyptian mythology. Certainly, when we say the word we are not giving honor to Egyptian myths. Scripture tells us that Jesus is God's Amen, “the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.” (Rev. 3:14)

The first time Scripture uses the word is in the book of Numbers where it is being used to affirm the truth. (Num. 5:22) It is used twelve times alone in Deuteronomy to affirm the truth. (Deut. 27:15-26) Amen shows up in every major division of the Old Testament. (1 Ki. 1:36; 1 Chr. 16:36; Neh. 5:13; 8:6; Psa. 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48; Jer. 28:6) Often it is used as “Amen and amen” which may sound redundant to modern ears, but had a special ring to it, especially in the Psalms. (cf. Psa. 89:52) Paul uses the word fifteen times, only twice not using it at the end of a prayer. (1 Cor. 14:16; 2 Cor. 1:20) Peter, Jude, John (in the gospel), and the Hebrews Writer each use the word as well.

Scripture is unanimous in this conclusion: God's people in both the Testaments give their affirmation to the truth. The great example is Jesus, the only human being who did not need to say “Thus sayeth the Lord” since he was the Lord and spoke from his own authority. (Mat. 7:29) Jesus often began statements by saying, “Truly I say to you.” The word for “truly” is the word “Amen.” (Mat. 5:18, 26; Mar. 14:25; Luk. 23:43; Jno. 1:51) The trustworthiness, reliability, and faithfulness of the statement given the “Amen” is beyond dispute to those who give their approval in this way. This shows the necessity for testing before we give our “Amen” of approval and affirmation in sermons, songs, writings, speech, and conduct. (1 Jno. 4:1)

Thus, with such a great cloud of witnesses from Scripture, let us strive to say our “Amen” to each of these, if not with or words but with our hearts, when we have tested and approved the message we receive. And let us thank God for Jesus for whom we do this: “For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.” (2 Cor. 1:20)