

Living Word Fellowship Church

Revelation

An Overview of the Seven Stars and The Seven Churches of Revelation

The Church of Sardis

Book of Life and Eternal Security

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I. The Book of Life

A. Scripture References:

"He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." (Revelation 3:5; NASU)

"All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain." (Revelation 13:8; NASU)

"And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds." (Revelation 20:12; NASU)

"and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Revelation 21:27; NASU)

"Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life." (Philippians 4:3)

"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven." (Luke 10:20; NASU)

"to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect... (Hebrews 12:23; NASU)

B. History Related to the 'Book of Life':

1. In the OT the book of life was a register of all who held citizenship in the theocratic community of Israel. The idea was also common in the secular world and all Greek and Roman cities of that time kept a list of citizens according to their class or tribe in which new citizens were entered and from which degraded citizens were expunged. The promise here is positive that these will not in any way have their names blotted out.
2. Behind the depiction of "erasing" some see as relevant the practice in ancient Greek cities of deleting (ἐξαλείφειν) names of condemned persons when they were executed. The Jewish curse of the *minim* is thought to reflect a formula used generally by synagogues in Asia Minor against Christians: "May the Nazarenes and the *minim* suddenly perish, and may they be blotted out of the book of life and not enrolled with the righteous."¹¹⁸⁷ Our analysis above points to the implausibility of the Greek background, but would not be incompatible with a

¹¹⁸⁷ Cf. Hemer, *Letters*, 148–51; Moffatt, "Revelation," 365.

possible synagogue allusion, which could perhaps be an assurance that Christians would never have their names erased from the true book of life.

3. The ancient practice of keeping various kinds of records has an analogy in the concept of heavenly record books. Although the only OT use of the complete expression "book of the living" (Hebr. *sĕper ḥayyim*) is in [Ps 69:28](#), God's "book" in [Ex 32:32](#) is part of the same concept. To be blotted out of this book means an (untimely) end of life. The use of the concept in [Ps 139:16](#) includes an expression of predestination, and in [Isa 4:3](#) it refers to those who will live in an ideal future state. The related idea of a record of deeds, found in [Ps 56:8](#) and perhaps [40:7](#), is associated with the "book of the living" in [69:28](#). There is more of a future reference in the similar [BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE](#) in [Mal 3:16](#). A further development is the conception of a book or books upon which the final judgment is to be based, in the apocalyptic writings ([Dan 7:10; 12:1](#); [Jub. 30:20, 22; 36:10; 39:6; 1 En. 47 :3; 108 :3](#); cf. also the [BOOK OF TRUTH](#) , apparently God's plan for history, [Dan 10:21](#)).
4. A heavenly book in which the names of the righteous (the redeemed or saved) are written. The concept of God having a "book of life" was probably first enunciated by Moses, who prayed that God would blot him out of God's book rather than dooming his fellow Israelites ([Ex 32:32-33](#)). This concept likely arose from the practice of registering people by genealogy ([Neh 7:5,64](#)) and keeping a record of priests and Levites ([Neh 12:22-23](#)).

C. General Description of the Book of Life:

1. The Lord talked about future rewards to be given to "all who are victorious." The righteousness of the "victorious" will be acknowledged by Christ before the Father (cf. [Matt. 10:32](#)). The "Book of Life" (3:5) refers to the book of the redeemed (cf. [20:15; 21:27](#)). The concept of the "Book of Life" is seen in [Exodus 32:32-33](#), [Psalm 69:28](#), and [Daniel 12:1](#). For "clothed in white" (3:5), see [3:18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13; and 19:14](#).²

D. Erasing the Names:

1. A possible inference from this second aspect of the overcomers' promise in v 5b is that if the readers do not overcome, they will be "erased from the book of life." But this is not a logically necessary inference, and it is unlikely that it is in mind. First, none of the other promises to the overcomer contains such an implicit threat of losing a salvation once gained, but they are coined in purely positive terms. The emphasis of this expression in 3:5b is that those who persevere and prove themselves genuine will surely receive the promise they deserve. If they are genuine believers, then their names, indeed, have already been written down in "the book of life," they are destined for a salvific inheritance, and nothing will prevent them from possessing it. In somewhat unusual fashion the positive guarantee of this inheritance is expressed negatively: "I will not erase his name."
2. Another reason this should not be understood as referring to a possible loss of authentic salvation is that in John's scheme throughout the names of those who ultimately prove themselves unbelievers are never at any point associated positively with the "book of life," but only the "books" of judgment (though their names are, of course, mentioned as "not having been written in the book of life" [[13:8; 17:8](#)]). Therefore, in the writer's thinking it would be impossible to conceive of them being erased from the "book of life," since their names were never written there in the first place (as [13:8](#) and [17:8](#) clearly show).
3. The text does not state that any believer will have his name blotted out of the Book of Life ([Luke 10:20](#)). Rather, the faithful believer will be resoundingly confessed before the saints, the angels, and the Father by the Son ([Matt. 10:32, 33; 2 Tim. 2:12](#)). To have the Lord publicly confess one's name is to have the Lord's approval of one's character and service ([Matt. 10:32, 33; 1 Tim. 2:12, 13](#)).

E. Jesus Confesses the Names to His Father:

² Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). [Tyndale concise Bible commentary](#) (p. 739). Tyndale House Publishers.

1. The third aspect of the promise of 3:5b affirms that Christ will confess the names of believers to his Father and to the angels. The idea may be that he will read the believers' names out of the book of life in recognition of their final salvation. This part of the promise uniquely corresponds to the problem of witness in Smyrna and to those who overcome it. Those who confess Christ's name have their own name confessed by Christ before the Father. That this is the thought is apparent when we recognize 3:5c as an allusion to Matt. 10:32 (= Luke 12:8): "*Everyone therefore who will confess me before people, I will confess him before my Father who is in heaven*" (Luke 12:8 emphasizes confession before angels; cf. 2 Tim. 2:12).³¹⁸³
2. The second part of the saying, which John cites, is probably an abbreviation of the larger Synoptic statement and is meant to recall the first part.⁴¹⁸² The Synoptic saying occurs in both Matthew and Luke in contexts of persecution in which believers are encouraged to follow Jesus' example (Matt. 10:38–39) by testifying to their faith even though they may suffer (cf. Matt. 10:28–29). In the light of the analysis we have given of the letter to Smyrna, the same situation appears to be in mind here.⁵¹⁸³

II. Eternal Security

A. The Problem:

Many people argue that if a person who believes in Christ, and in His death and resurrection, does not consistently live a Christian life, they will eventually lose their eternal life and will be once again be doomed for hell.

They believe that a person does not gain their salvation by works but they maintain their salvation by their consistent obedience of God's Word.

Note: **A person cannot lose something they never earned.**

B. Passages that Assure Believers of their Salvation:

1. God never promises to give believers life that is temperate or conditional, but **eternal life** (John 3:16,18,36; 5:24; 6:47; 1 John 2:25; Titus 1:2) **that is a gift** (Romans 6:23). This life is provided not because of our works but because of His grace (Eph. 2:8-9)
2. After John has explained, in John 10:1-21, that Jesus in the "good shepherd" who laid down His life for His sheep and picked it up again, and that the "good shepherd" is also the gate, **John then states in verses 28-29 that "and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."** Please notice that he mentions twice "**no one is able to snatch them.**"
3. John 14:16; "**I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper that He may be with you forever.**"
4. The Bible also states that we are not holding unto to God, He is the one who is protecting us (1 Peter 1:3-6; **Jude 24-25**; John 10:28).
5. Christ also promises that all who believe in Him shall be raised up in the last day, and He will not lose anyone (John 6:39-40).
6. If "**greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world**" (1 John 4:4), then how can Satan steal us from Christ, especially when we are "**in all things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.**" (Rom. 8:37)

³¹⁸³ For a similar conclusion cf. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7*, 264; in 2 Esdras 2:43–47 those who confess the name of God receive immortal garments and crowns.

⁴¹⁸² Cf. Bauckham, "Synoptic Parousia Parables," 164–65.

⁵¹⁸³ For a similar conclusion cf. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7*, 264; in 2 Esdras 2:43–47 those who confess the name of God receive immortal garments and crowns.

Please remember that the Word of God also states that "***nor any other created things, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord***" (Rom. 8:39).

7. We are hidden in Christ (Col. 3:3), and cannot be separated from His love (Rom. 8:39), how can we lose our salvation.
8. **Children who are born into a family cannot be unborn** (John 3:1-15). **"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." (2 Corinthians 5:17). When Christ make us new how can we get old again?**
9. When believers sin Christ says that "*He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,*" not dump us out of heaven.
10. **Since I am saved by grace and not of myself, then how can I lose it as a result of myself?** How can I lose life that was given by grace. The fact that I was saved by grace is proof that God knew that I would still make mistakes as a believer (this is why God told Paul His grace was sufficient; 1 John 1:8-9), so he provided grace, not so that I would sin more, but so that His grace, which is proof of His love, would cause me to mature.

C. Summary Response to Controversial Passages Listed Above (Hebrews 6:1-8; John 15:1-17; 1 John 4:4-10; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

1. Hebrews 6:1-8: This passage is speaking to believers who like the Israelites in the wilderness had experienced God but decided to do whatever they wanted to do, so instead of experiencing the Promise Land they were judged. In other words, believers who turn away, and continue to live ungodly lives, will be judged (just like the Israelites, and therefore would be unable to return to Christ, in the manner in which they once were). Once they willfully reject the Word of God and willfully chose to live a sinful life there is no new salvific message that can be conceived to can lead them back to Christ so it is impossible to bring them back - a state of apostasy ensures.
2. John 15:1-17: The issue here is not losing our salvation, **the issue who is Christ disciple (15:8)**. If someone wants to experience **God's abiding power** he must obey God's Word. His focus is on how a believer can bear 'much fruit' not whether or not they are saved. To be cut off is not losing one's salvation. As Romans 6:23 states the believer will no longer experience the prompting of the Holy Spirit or can physically die (1 Corinthians 11:27-32; 1 John 5:16-17 - can experience an early death).
3. 1 John 4:4-10; The issue here is that Gnostic philosophers were stating that believers can continue to live the way they used to live because Christ lived inside, not outside. **So John was making a distinction between those who say that they are saved and those who are not**. The issue was not gaining or losing salvation.
4. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27: Paul in this passage is **discussing winning rewards, not losing salvation**.

D. Conclusion:

It is impossible to lose salvation when we did not earn it, or gain what you do not have the power to provide (Ephesians 2:8-10).

1 John 3:4-9 – The issue is not whether or not we can lose our salvation, it is more whether or not we gained it in the first place?

The difference between the Old and New Testament is permanence of salvation. We cannot make the argument of losing our salvation from the Old Testament. Salvation in the Old Testament was conditional (Deuteronomy 28).