

The Mystery of the Book of Life

David claimed that God keeps a record of every tear we shed in His “book” (see Ps. 56:8). Surely, that was a reference to the “Book of Life,” a concept found only in Judaism and Christianity.

Since God is omniscient—and He knows all things past, present and future—why would He need a book or a registry of all His people? Could this just be poetic and metaphorical, a symbol God uses to compare a heavenly truth to an earthly object to make it more understandable on a human level? Or is it literal? Only God knows for sure.

The “Book of Life” is mentioned 16 times in the Bible. It is first cited in Exodus 32. Moses had been on Mount Sinai, communing with God and receiving the tablets of stone bearing Yahweh’s handwriting. But while Moses was away from the camp, the children of Israel, just 40 days after hearing the audible voice of God declare the Ten Commandments from fiery Mount Sinai, brazenly broke the first two—creating an idol (a golden calf) and dancing around it in a demonic frenzy of false worship. God was minded toward destroying them all and raising up a new nation from Moses’ seed. But this great prophet of Israel interceded:

“Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written” (Ex. 32:31-32).

After such a self-sacrificing plea, God changed His mind, pouring out mercy on Israel instead of judgment. However, God did add, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book” (Ex. 32:33).

Centuries later, David mentioned this book in his poetic masterpiece, Psalm 139, confessing to God:

“Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them” (v. 16).

So apparently, the Book of Life contains, not only names, but a detailed prophetic forecast of the potential, the purpose and the destiny of every person in covenant with God. The steps of good men and women are “ordered of the Lord” (Ps. 37:23). It is up to us to prayerfully become sensitive to His revealed will and then boldly walk in it.

When Jesus sent out His 70 disciples to preach the kingdom of God with signs and wonders, they came back thrilled over the manifestation of God’s power, declaring, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name” (Luke 10:17). Jesus responded, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven ... Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:18-20). There is no greater joy than being included.

The book of Revelation contains the most references to this famed book. In it, the resurrected Savior declares to the church in Sardis:

“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” (Rev. 3:5).

This and other passages reveal that our goal is not to get our names written in God’s book but to make sure they are never blotted out. Does that mean that every living person in this world starts out included in that heavenly registry, but those who rebel against truth are erased? It seems so. In this case, the old hymn didn’t exactly get it right:

“There’s a new name written down in glory, and it’s mine, oh yes, it’s mine.”

The idea crafted by that song was this: As soon as a person gets saved (born again), his or her name is “written down” in God’s book in the heavenly sphere. Not so, according to the passages already mentioned.

In *Revealing the True Light* on Charisma Podcast Network, I fully examine all the Scriptures pertaining to this mysterious subject. You will be intrigued and blessed by this study.
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