

The Church in Sardis (Part 2 of 2)---The Book of Life

Revelation 3:1-6 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

"To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

*He who has **the seven spirits of God and the seven stars**, says this: 'I know your deeds, **that you have a name that you are alive, and yet you are dead.**'² **Be constantly alert, and strengthen the things that remain**, which were about to die; for **I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.**'³ So remember what you have received and heard; and **keep it, and repent.** Then **if you are not alert**, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.⁴ But you have **a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments;** and they will walk with Me **in white**, for they are worthy.⁵ The one who overcomes will be **clothed the same way, 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.**'⁶ The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'*

Introduction

A recap of the last five Sundays:

In the past five Sundays, we learned a few things from Jesus' letters to the five churches in Asia Minor: A. Hold on to His truth and defend the biblical truth against false teachings. B. The Lord Jesus hates idol worship and sexual immorality among the believers. C. Jesus calls for repentance in the Church. D. Eternal life is promised to those who remain faithful to the Lord until death. E. The only way to revive a dead church is prayer.

Last Sunday, we covered the first four verses in today's text, and this morning we will finish the last two verses, 5 and 6. We are going to focus on two things: *White garments and the Book of Life*. Jesus the Lamb of God has everything to do with both. *Without Jesus, there will be no white garments for us. Without the faith in the Lamb of God, no one is found in the Book of Life* (Invite the congregation to say it together one more time). Let's dig in.

Content

Verse 5a. Christ saying,

Verse 5a:⁵ *The one who overcomes **will be clothed the same way, in white garments;**...*

Color 'White': Christ says those who overcome will be clothed in white garments. Let's talk about the color 'white.' There's something about the color white. Many people like the color 'white.' Did you know that the most popular color among cars in America is white?¹ (Carfax.com). Did you also know that the same color is a predominant color in Heaven?! Of course, Heaven is full of many other colors beyond our imagination, so beautiful that those who have been to Heaven say that it is impossible to describe with words. However, one thing I can tell you is this. The predominant color in Heaven is white. To name a few, **God's throne** is in white. John the Apostle witnessed as follows: *Then I saw a great **white throne** and*

Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled, and no place was found for them (Revelation 20:11).

Around God's throne, there are twenty-four thrones and upon the thrones **twenty-four elders** sitting, **clothed in white garments**, and golden crowns on their heads (Revelation 4:4). **The martyrs wear a white robe** in Heaven: *And a **white robe** was given to each of them; and they were told that they were to rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers and sisters who were to be killed even as they had been, was completed also* (Revelation 6:11).

The **Coming Christ** will sit **on a white horse** (Revelation 19:11). So will **God's armies ride on white horses clothed in white** and clean linen: *And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, **white** and clean, were following Him on **white horses*** (Revelation 19:14).

In Heaven, we will be clothed in white robes along with "**a great multitude which no one could count**, from every nation and all the tribes, peoples, and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, **clothed in white robes**, and palm branches were in their hands;" (Revelation 7:9).

Finally, when **Jesus** was transfigured before His disciples on the mountain, His garments turned into **white as light**: *And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His **garments became as white as light*** (Matthew 17:2). Do you remember all **the angels** who appeared to the women on Easter morning were clothed in white as well? (Matthew 28: 2-3, John 20:12, Mark 16:5, cf. Acts 1:10). White is the color of Heaven.

White **Garments**: *In the Bible, the color 'white' represents purity, holiness, righteousness, and victory. **Garments** represent the daily walk with God. So, **white garments** represent the life of saints that demonstrate purity, holiness, righteousness, mercy and victory before God. What makes our garments white? Nothing but the blood of the Lamb of God that washes away our sins: "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and **made them white in the blood of the Lamb**"* (Revelation 7:14). White garments cover the shame of our sin and guilt in Christ. Listen to Christ who says to the Church in Laodicea as follows: *"I advise you to **buy from Me** gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and **white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed;**"* (Revelation 3:18).

Remember the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, washes away our sins and clothe us in white garments in Heaven.

For the rest of my sermon, I will talk about the Book of Life.

Verse 5b: ⁵... *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.*

The Book of Life: The phrase 'the Book of Life' appears 8 times altogether in the Bible. Once in the Old Testament (Psalm 69:28) and 7 times in the New Testament (Philippians 4:3 and six times in Revelation).

What is the Book of Life? Actually, it is more accurate to call it the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21:27, Revelation 13:8) ---the Book that has everything to do with Jesus Christ the Lamb of God. It is the book where the names of those whose sins are washed away by the blood of the Lamb of God. It is the book where the names of all the born-again believers are written who believe in Jesus the Lamb of God and what He has done for sinners. It is a register of the citizens of God's Kingdom in Heaven forever. God will refer to this Book to determine each one's eternal destination.

This Book of Life is located right next to God's throne. Besides the Book of Life, there are other books next to God's throne where all the words and deeds that everyone did in their life on earth are written. Each person will be judged according to their deeds.

Concerning these books, John the Apostle testifies: *"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).

On the Judgment Day, Christ will separate all the nations into **two groups**: one group for eternal life and the other group for eternal judgment. Let's listen to Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46: ³¹ *"But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. ³² And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, just as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³ and He will put the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left.*

³⁴ *"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶ naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? ³⁸ And when did we see You as a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹ And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of Mine, you did it for Me.'*

⁴¹ *"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, you accursed people, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' ⁴⁴ Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or as a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' ⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it for one of the*

least of these, you did not do it for Me, either."⁴⁶ These will go away into **eternal punishment**, but the righteous into **eternal life**."

Now, all of us are concerned about whether our names are written in the Book of Life. By the way, **each one's eternal destiny was decided before the foundation of the world** (this is called predestination which deserves another sermon for later). For the believers in Christ, God's Word declares, "He (God-kc) chose us in Him (Christ-kc) **before the foundation of the world**, that we would be holy and blameless before Him (God-kc)" (Ephesians 1:4). Having chosen you, God the Father has written your name in the Book of Life before the universe was created.

Christ points out that we ought to **rejoice over the eternal blessing of our names written in Heaven**. "¹⁷ Now the seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name!"¹⁸ And He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like lightning. ¹⁹ Behold, I have given you authority to walk on snakes and scorpions, and authority over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you. ²⁰ Nevertheless, **do not rejoice in this**, that the spirits are subject to you, **but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven**" (Luke 10:17-20). Revelation 22:14 says, "¹⁴ **Blessed are those who wash their robes**, so that they will have the right to the tree of life, and may enter the city by the gates." We ought to be forever grateful for this blessing.

Let me reiterate. **God has written your name in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world, long time before you were born**. One pastor (Adriel Sanchez) puts this way: "If you're a Christian, when was your name written in the Lamb's book of life? Did it happen when you were born again or some other time?...But when, exactly, was your name written in the book of life if you're a Christian? Was it the moment you were baptized? Was it when you professed faith in Jesus Christ? ... our salvation is the result of God's sovereignty. You don't go in and out of the book of life in a he-loves-me-he-loves-me-not kind of a way. No, God was absolutely sovereign from the very beginning and has always known those who are his.

So, God didn't write your name in his book of life when you were baptized, prayed a prayer, and first heard the gospel. ... if you're a Christian, **God wrote your name in his book before he created the world.**"²

Your names are written in the Book of Life. Praise God for it every day.

On the other hand, the Bible lists those whose names have not been written since the foundation of the world in the Book of Life. First, **those who worship the beast** in the end times. Let's hear Revelation 13:8: "All who live on the earth will worship him (the beast-kc), **everyone whose name has not been written since the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb** who has been slaughtered." It is written again in Revelation 17:8: "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who live on the earth, **whose names have not been written**

in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was, and is not, and will come."

Next, those who practice "**abomination and lying**" (Revelation 21:27). "¹⁵... **the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral persons, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying**" (Revelation 22:15).

Thirdly, **those who do not live out** God's will in their daily life. Jesus says, ²¹ Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.** ²² Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; leave Me, you who practice lawlessness' (Matthew 7:21-23).

Such people will be thrown into the lake of fire: "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was **thrown into the lake of fire**" (Revelation 20:15).

There's a warning to those who are complacent in their faith walk: names can be erased from the Book of Life. Let me read verse 5b again (Revelation 3:5b). Christ says to the Church in Sardis: **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.**"

I take this verse as Christ's promise that He will **NEVER EVER** erase names of the overcomers from the Book of Life. Those who do not renounce the name of Jesus, those who faithfully follow Jesus and keep His commandments, and those who lose their lives on account of faith in Jesus.

Now, while this promise is true, the opposite is equally true: the names of those who renounce the name of Jesus, of those who do not do the will of heavenly Father, and of those who deny the Lord in front of people can be erased from the Book of Life. This refutes the belief and teaching of "Once saved, always saved." Here's why I believe so for the following three cases: apostasy, blasphemy, and idolatry.

Apostasy after Tasting of Salvation. Hebrews 6:4-8 warns about the danger of apostasy: "⁴ For **it is impossible**, in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ and then have fallen away, **to restore them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.** ⁷ For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and produces vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; ⁸ but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned." Here's another case to consider.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Jesus warns in Mark 3:28-30: ²⁸ "Truly I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons and daughters of men, and whatever blasphemies they commit; ²⁹ but **whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin**" — ³⁰ because they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit." I doubt anyone who is truly born-again would ever blaspheme Jesus or the Holy Spirit, but we must be aware of this. Here's the third case.

Idol worship. Exodus 32:30-35: ³⁰ "And on the next day Moses said to the people, "You yourselves have committed a great sin; and now I am going up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." ³¹ Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Oh, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves! ³² But now, if You will forgive their sin, very well; but if not, please wipe me out from **Your book** which You have written!" ³³ However, the Lord said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, **I will wipe him out of My book.**" ³⁴ But go now, lead the people where I told you. Behold, My angel shall go before you; nevertheless on the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin." ³⁵ Then the Lord struck the people with a plague, because of what they did with the calf which Aaron had made." ³

One last thing: God doesn't play with the names in the Book of Life. The Scripture doesn't support that He writes, erases, and rewrites names in the Book of Life depending on how good we have been. Pastor Sanchez again: "You don't go in and out of the book of life in a he-loves-me-he-loves-me-not kind of a way." ⁴

Verse 6: ⁶ *The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'*

Once again, Christ leaves it up to us. The choice is yours. Listen, discern, and decide wisely according to Christ's commands.

Conclusion

Even though we have the assurance that our names are written in the Book of Life, let us be vigilant not to fall into apostasy, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and idolatry.

Amen.

End Notes

1. <https://www.carfax.com/blog/most-popular-car-colors>.
2. <https://corechristianity.com/resources/articles/faq-when-does-god-write-our-names-in-the-book-of-life>.
3. Not everyone believes that God's Book in Exodus is the same as the Book of Life in Revelation. For instance, Pastor John MacArthur argues that wiping someone out from God's Book in Exodus is untimely death, not related to eternal life.
4. <https://corechristianity.com/resources/articles/faq-when-does-god-write-our-names-in-the-book-of-life>.