

# Three Books on God's Reading List

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Books are mentioned in the Bible 196 times, but only three are on God's reading list. John wrote, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Revelation 20:12). Since both "books" (plural) and a "book" (singular) were opened, we may conclude that we will likely see three books before God on Judgment Day. Daniel saw a similar vision: "The judgment was set, and the books were opened" (Daniel 7:10).

[easy-tweet tweet="At the Judgment Day, God will read from three books..." user="HousetoHouseHTH"]

## The Book of Deeds.

### This is man's book in God's hand.

The lives of kings and world leaders are chronicled for history's scrutiny. Of Josiah, it was said, "the acts of Josiah, and his goodness . . . and his deeds, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings" (2 Chronicles 35:26–27). The lives of popular figures are recorded in the pictures of the Papparazzi so that they are rarely out of public view. Sports heroes and military leaders

have books written about their lives and mighty deeds.

We may never hold office or star in a film, but our lives are the subject of a book. God records our words (Matthew 12:36–37), the things done in our bodies, whether they are good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10), and one day He “will render to every man according to his deeds” (Romans 2:6). Our wanderings and our tears are in God’s book (Psalm 56:8), as are the members of our bodies (Psalm 139:16). Our hairs are numbered (Luke 12:7) and our daily fruits are counted (Matthew 12:33). Solomon observed, “Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right” (Proverbs 20:11).

Little did Job realize that the very words of complaint about not being heard were being recorded both in heaven and on earth to be read for all generations: “Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!” (Job 19:23–24). God heard Nehemiah when he prayed, “Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof” (Nehemiah 13:14).

On the other hand, when God spread out His hands all day unto a rebellious people, but they provoked Him to anger continually, ate swine’s flesh, and said to others, “I am holier than thou,” that too was “written before” Him (Isaiah 65:1–6). God recorded Abimelech’s righteous rebuke of Abraham, when he said, “Thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done” (Genesis 20:9). He recorded the injustice the Jewish fathers did to His prophets, and their descendants’ approval of it (Luke 11:48; cf. John 8:41). Jesus noted and hated “the deeds of the Nicolaitans” (Revelation 2:6).

What are our action items from this fact?

## **We should take care of editing the sins of yesterday.**

We can never go back and rewrite a page, but God does allow us to edit it by applying the blood of Christ to erase past sins (Hebrews 8:12; cf. Colossians 1:14; Romans 4:8; Isaiah 43:25).

## **We should be motivated to live a holy life.**

God's biographies of our lives get a page longer each day we live. It can become easy to go through the motions—practice religion by rote or remote. Knowing that God has the “record” button on will help us remain determined to do right. Peter wrote of the coming judgment, concluding, “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Peter 3:11). Paul said, “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20).

## **We should be cautious to walk carefully along the narrow way.**

If you notice a police car behind you while driving, are you extra careful to drive safely? If your boss is watching your performance at work, do you pay close attention to each detail? Jesus said, succinctly, “What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch” (Mark 13:37). The veteran Paul counseled the fresh-faced Timothy: “Watch thou in all things” (2 Timothy 4:5). Paul advised all of us, “Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober” (1 Thessalonians 5:6). The church at Sardis once became careless about their religion. Believe it or not, they received a letter from Jesus advising them that He was aware of their situation. He advised that they “Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and

hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (Revelation 3:3).

## **The Book of Scriptures.**

**This is God's book in man's hand (2 Timothy 3:16–17; Ephesians 3:1–6).**

[easy-tweet tweet="The only book that occupies library space both on earth and in heaven is the Bible."]

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

God was not required to give man the standard by which he would be judged, but He did. Judgment Day will not be a "pop test." Teachers sometimes give unannounced tests to gauge students' mastery of homework assignments or lecture points. Most students much prefer to know in advance when tests will occur, and they really appreciate teachers who go over what will be on the test ahead of time. This allows for better preparation and hopefully a passing grade.

This is what God did with us. Judgment will not be a "pop test" because God has given us the test ahead of time. Jesus said, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). This does not mean that only the "red letters" will be required for Paul said, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Romans 2:16). Since the entire New Testament is the last will and testament of Jesus Christ, it is all spoken by Him. For those who lived during the time of the ancients, the verbal commands given to the patriarchs

(such as Noah, Abraham, and Job) will be opened at the Judgment. For those who lived in the middle dispensation of Judaism who had the Law of Moses, the written Old Testament will be opened, and for those living today, the New Testament of Christ will be opened (Hebrews 1:1–3; cf. Colossians 2:14; Ephesians 2:15).

What is our action item here? If your life depended on passing a test, would you read the material it covered before taking it? Would you burn “midnight oil” until you had grasped as much of the textbook as possible? More than your life is riding on passing life’s final test. If we pass it, we spend eternity with God in heaven; if we fail it, we endure an agony beyond description with Satan in hell (Matthew 25:46).

The good news is that the Bible is more accessible in our generation than at any other point in history. According to statistics from Wycliffe International, the Society of Gideons, and the International Bible Society, the number of new Bibles that are sold, given away, or otherwise distributed in the United States is about 168,000 per day. Further, the Internet has made the Bible available in the spoken languages in a way that it has never been before.

The bad news is that fewer people are reading it. One reason for this is that fewer people are reading at all. One in four adults read no books in the past year. People read one book a year on average—and it typically is not the Bible. Kobo Reading Life website says, “The average person reads less than 100 books in their lifetime.” Many—dare we say most—leave the world without having even read the Bible at all.

One positive is that religious works were in the top two choices for readers (along with popular fiction). One study noted that 92 percent of Americans own a Bible, and 72 percent say they would like to read the entire Bible sometime in their lives. Oh, the things that one misses by leaving the Bible alone! It contains 1,260 promises, 6,468 commands, more than

8,000 predictions, and 3,294 questions/answers. Why not make it your goal not only to read the Bible but also to master it?

## **The Book of Names.**

### **This is God's book in God's hand.**

God keeps "a book of remembrance" written before Him of those that fear the Lord, and that think upon His name (Malachi 3:16; cf. Exodus 32:32). Jesus told us to rejoice because our names are "written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

God adds a name to His book every time a sinner is baptized for the remission of his sins (Acts 2:38). Scriptural baptism is preceded by faith in Christ (Mark 16:16; John 8:24), turning from sin (Luke 13:3), and confession of Christ (Matthew 10:32–33). It is followed by faithful worship (Hebrews 10:25), godly living (Titus 2:11–14), helping others (Galatians 6:10; James 1:27), and abounding in good works (1 Corinthians 15:58, Titus 3:1).

We must also be aware that God's pencil has both a point and an eraser. It erases (blots out) the names of Christians who go back to the world from which they were once delivered (2 Peter 2:20–22; Revelation 22:19; cf. Psalm 69:28).

Also called "the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 21:27), God will use His book of names as the roll call of redemption on the last day. Paul mentioned that Clement and other fellow laborers had their names "in the book of life" (Philippians 4:3). Perhaps this is what made him think to say next: "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." It could also be that this verse connects to the previous one as a reminder to Euodias and Syntyche to get along with each other on earth because they are both enrolled in heaven's census to be together forever.

What is our action item here?

## **First, recognize that God knows your name.**

A name is a word or phrase that constitutes the distinctive designation of a person or thing. Having a name signifies that you have lived (Jeremiah 1:5). You count to God. There are no anonymous births. There are no forgotten people on earth. God notes everyone. We hear of identity theft, but there can be no identity theft with God. The Lord who named all of the stars and knows that staggering number by name (Psalm 147:4) assures us that He certainly knows who we are.

## **Second, strive to keep a good name.**

We are born with a good name, and God allows us to choose what to do with it (Joshua 24:15). He wants us to make wise choices so our name will be fondly thought of: "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold" (Proverbs 22:1).

## **Third, we must make sure that our names are on God's list.**

Your name was recorded on a birth certificate at the hospital when you were born; at the social security office in Washington, DC, when you were assigned a number; in the state trooper's office when you got a driver's license; and at the court house when you got married. Your name has likely been on a lot of other lists through the years—some good and others that are less desirable.

- A telemarketer's list is a bad list to be on. A "do not call" list might be a good list to be on.
- A Mafia "hit list" is a bad list to be on; a Dean's List is a good list to be on.
- We might not want to be on a waiting list, but we would like to be on a promotion list.

A more important question is, "Has your name been recorded on a church record where you were baptized?" Most important of all, "Has it been recorded in heaven at that time you were born again according to the teaching of the Spirit?" (John 3:3-5).

[easy-tweet tweet="The Lord writes our names in the Book of Life when we obey Him."]

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). Verse 47 of the second chapter says, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Yes, those who obey the gospel have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life, but those who refuse to obey God will never have their names written there.

An eleven-year old Council Bluffs, Iowa, boy discovered that he had a problem. When his parents applied for his passport so the family could make a trip outside the country, they discovered that their son didn't have a birth certificate. As far as local and state records were concerned, he did not exist. Neither the county clerk's office nor the office of vital statistics of the state's department of health had a record of his birth. His parents were told that, from a legal standpoint, they didn't have a son born on the date they claimed he was born. Apparently someone had failed to file the appropriate paperwork.

Thankfully, the boy's problem was soon resolved, but others have a more serious problem awaiting them. Imagine getting to the Judgment Day and finding that one is missing his "new birth" certificate! Anyone whose name is missing from the book of names will be denied citizenship in heaven (Revelation 21:27), and there will be no opportunity to correct the mistake then (Matthew 25:10). Since God makes no record-keeping mistakes, only we can be blamed if our names are not written there.



## How can we get our name in God's Book of Names?

It is better to have your name written there than to have it on the largest bank check ever drawn. But how? We have no access or authority to write our names there. We can sign checks, order forms, and letters, but we cannot register ourselves in the Lamb's book. We cannot buy or bribe our way into the book.

Another hand is going to have to write it there for you. But whose? Who is worthy to open the book and write in it? (cf. Revelation 5:2).

- No man has authority to write in God's book. Can my preacher, lawyer, or doctor take care of it for me? Can my congressman or senator do it? All these may legitimately act in our behalf in matters that affect life here, but none has any power to move a pen in heaven.
- No man is smart enough to figure a way to write it. One may study to acquire every major degree offered for study, but he will never be smart enough to write his name in heaven.
- No man is powerful enough to make it happen. No king, dictator, general, or scientist can write his name in heaven.

Only one person has that right. It is the privilege of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. If your name is ever written in heaven, it will be written by His hand, and no other.

Jesus lays down certain very definite conditions regarding entry to the kingdom. Among them are:

- No man can enter the kingdom without the correct standard of righteousness. The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees is insufficient (Matthew 5:20).

The Bible, and its record of Christ's perfect life, is the proper standard (John 12:48).

- No one can enter the kingdom who does not believe. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). Belief is the starting point, but beyond belief are other important requirements.
- No man can enter the kingdom without the childlike spirit that leads to repentance (Matthew 18:3). Such a humble person readily accepts the teachings of the kingdom and desires to learn more.
- No one can enter the kingdom without the courage to acknowledge its King (Matthew 10:32-33).
- No one can enter the kingdom without being born again of water and the Spirit (John 3:3, 5). This means to be baptized in accord with the Spirit's teachings.
- No man can enter the kingdom without the forgiving spirit (Matthew 18:23-35).
- No man can enter the kingdom who does not help others in need (Matthew 25:31-46; cf. Acts 9:1-5). We must not be guilty of abusing, ignoring, or even failing to love others.

As there are conditions of entry to the kingdom, so there are hindrances to enter into it.

- Riches make it hard to enter the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:16-23; Mark 10:23-25; Luke 18:24-27).
- Indecision hinders entry into the kingdom. If a man puts his hand to the plough, and looks back, he is not fit for entry into the kingdom (Luke 9:61-62). Parable after parable involves a judgment on a man based on how he did or did not accept the opportunities and perform the duties of life (Matthew 13:24-30, 37-43, 47-50).
- Stubbornness hinders many people. The invitation to

enter the kingdom can be refused, as one may refuse an invitation to a feast (Matthew 22:1–14; Luke 14:15–24).

- Carelessness causes some to be lost. The foolish bridesmaids lost their opportunity to share in the joy of the wedding festivities (Matthew 25:1–13).
- Procrastination will ruin others. The privilege of entering the kingdom may be taken away (Matthew 8:11, 21–22; Luke 13:28).
- Sin is the ultimate roadblock to the kingdom. John said, “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the lamb’s book of life” (Revelation 21:27).

V. P. Black wrote, “My friends, I say to you without the least fear of exaggeration that many will never realize they are lost until those books are opened. Many will learn at that time that the most important thing in life was not their friends; it was not their money; it was not their property. The most important thing was the soul, and if we don’t learn it in this world, we will learn it when the books are opened.” Jesus said, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26).

The thought of our names in heaven is one of the most comforting, beautiful, and consoling thoughts that we can contemplate. The thought of arriving with no “new birth certificate” is the most horrifying nightmare one could ever face.