

02-09-29b Revelation

We're ready now to resume our study in Revelation chapter 3. Lord Jesus Christ has sent a letter to each of seven churches in the area of Asia. This fifth letter, the letter to Sardis, concludes with this promise of reward. It says, to him that overcomes, I will clothe in white garments and not blot out his name from the book of life, but I will confess his name before my father and before his angels.

So we have the concept of name threaded through this letter. He says you have a name that you're alive, but you're dead. You have a few names in Sardis that have not soiled their garments.

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. Well, the burning question before us is, what exactly does it mean to have the promise of not having your name blotted from the book of life? If this book of life is the roster of the saved, then we need to revise our understanding of how long we keep our salvation because it would depend on how good we are.

And we know from many other passages that our salvation is secure. It is a once-for-all event. It happens like a birth.

The Lord Jesus compared it to a birth. He told Nicodemus, you must be born again. Once you are born to your parents, whether or not your parents separate, whether they die, whatever they say about you, you are always and eternally the product of the union of your parents.

And you can't un-birth yourself. You can try to have your legal status changed. You can change your name.

You can do a lot of things. But the fact of your birth is an irreversible fact of life. Same is true with spiritual birth.

There are those who say that it is possible to lose your salvation that you, in the same way that you accept the grace of God, you can at some subsequent point repudiate it. But the action of God in regeneration, in sealing, Jesus said I will give you the Holy Spirit and he will be with you forever. He didn't say he will be with you as long as you are faithful.

People go to John 15 where it talks about the vine and the branches and they say, well, Jesus said that if the branch is unfruitful it will be cut off and cast into the fire and burned. But the assumption there, and you always have to go back, what is the assumption? The assumption is that abiding in the vine is a metaphor for salvation and that if you are not abiding in the vine, you are not saved. But look at the abiding teaching that Jesus gave to his disciples and there is a command.

He says abide in me and let my words abide in you so that you can ask what you will and it will be done for you. Well if we, by virtue of being saved, abide in Christ, then it would be silly to give an imperative that says abide in me and let my words abide in you. These are choices that we make, it's a lifestyle, pattern of life choice that we make.

We choose whether or not we are going to abide in the vine. This is a picture not of salvation but of fruitfulness. This is life or death, production or lack thereof, much as the seed that falls in the soil of the soul.

When Jesus taught the parable of the soils, he wasn't saying out of all that the seed is the gospel and where it springs up in a day but the sun hits it and it withers and dies, that's the person that was saved for a little while but then it withered and now they're not saved anymore. The seed is the word and this is a picture of fruitfulness. Do we produce the fruit that God is looking for? You go to Hebrews chapter 6, it's probably good to review that passage because that sheds light on all of these others.

Hebrews chapter 6, the author says let's leave the discussion of the basic things, of the elementary things of Christ. He's been trying to talk about, he says you ought to be teaching the word of God by this time. You people that I'm talking to, you've known your scriptures, you've been taught but at such a time as you should be teachers and ready to pass this on to others, instead you have need that one teach you again the first principles of the doctrine of Christ.

You need milk and not solid food. They're still spiritually born but he says you should have grown up and you're still a baby. You're not ready for solid food.

We have to keep giving you model feeding. We have to keep giving you milk. He says let's leave the discussion of the elementary things of Christ and let's go on to perfection.

That word for perfection has the same idea as play Roma, to fill up. This is telestata, which is when Jesus said on the cross, his last words, what was the last thing Jesus said? In Greek it's telestai, it is finished, it's all done. Like Paul said, I have fought the good fight, I have run my race, I have completed the course, I was faithful unto death.

The Lord Jesus was faithful as long as he was alive. The apostle Paul was faithful as long as he was alive. We are enjoined in our previous letter here to be faithful unto death as long as we are alive.

So let's go on to telestai, to finish, to completion. Not laying again the foundation of change of mind away from dead works. What is the foundation? After you're saved, you begin this foundation in your soul.

It's not a part of being saved, change of mind away from dead works. After we're saved, what is the foundation? The first thing we have to learn is how to not produce a bunch of dead works.

How to not produce the wood, hay and stubble, the big bird nest that's going to go up in flames at the judgment.

That's a basic thing. The first thing a Christian needs to know is how can I do what I do in such a way that it has eternal ramifications. It gets recorded in heaven for good and for eternity.

We can do the same work and it doesn't count. We can do that same work and it does count. Change of mind away from dead works.

How do we make our works not dead? We have to do them in the light of faith. We have to do what we do, the very same mundane ordinary chores. We don't have to go to Borneo and be a missionary.

We don't have to go on the street corner and preach. We don't have to engage in inner city urban ministry. We don't have to go and offer our body to be burned or any of the other things that Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians.

We just have to do what we do in the light of trusting God. Do it before the Lord. Do it as unto the Lord.

I think about this sometimes when I have the chance to help someone. I think, well, someone has asked me if I can do this little small thing. I think, well, this person that needs a ride here, this person that needs a favor done, if this was the Lord Jesus Christ asking me for this favor or asking me to help with this task, how fully would I do it? How wholeheartedly would I do it? Someone comes up and says, can you get this for me? Can you help me obtain this book? Sometimes people ask me for a particular tape, not tape from here, but tape of music or one thing or another.

I think, well, how good a job should I do in making that tape or in doing this small favor or small task? All I have to do is cast it in terms of if this was the Lord Jesus Christ who came and said, could you make me this tape, how careful would I be? How much effort would I invest in it to make sure that it was quality, that it was the best I could do? That's what God says. Do what you do heartily as though you were doing it for God Himself. We miss the opportunities to do small things that have eternal weight of glory.

You can wash the dishes. You can give someone a ride. You can pray for someone.

If you do things as though you were doing it for the Lord, it changes their entire complexion, and God sees that. God looks in the heart and says, if you've done it for the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me. So that's change of mind away from dead works, and instead do it in the light of faith toward God.

That's what Hebrews chapter 6 says. If you go on down in that chapter, it says, verse 7, the earth drinks in the rain that often comes upon it and bears herbs that are useful for those by whom it's

cultivated. Everybody in the ancient Near East understood agriculture.

You've got a field there in which you've sowed seed. The rain comes from heaven. God sends the rain on the just and the unjust, the Bible says.

So here comes the rain, and what do you expect if you've sowed seed in a field and it rains? I expect the same thing as happens to my lawn when it rains. I expect it to grow. I expect to see progress.

I expect to see the stuff that I planted come up in there. Useful for those by whom it is cultivated, it receives blessing from God. The field that produces fruit receives blessing from God.

That is the statement of Hebrews chapter 6, verse 7. Verse 8 gives us the contrast. But if that same field which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, that's the daily graces of God, that's the availability of the teaching of the Word of God, the ever-present ministry of God's Spirit, that's the rain coming daily often upon it. If it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.

What do you do to a field and every time you plant it, every time you try to get a crop, all you get is a big bunch of thorns and briars. Even in Oklahoma today, there are sections of my father's land where all it does is produce briars. There are big briar patches up in the woods.

You can mow them down, you can chop them down, you can do anything you want. The only thing that will get rid of them is burning them. You've got to have a controlled burn and burn those things down to the roots and kill them so that they don't keep growing back.

It doesn't mean that you don't sell the field. You don't sow the field with salt and make it a byword of reprobation for all time and eternity. You burn off the unproductive thorns and briars that it produces.

It doesn't destroy the field, it destroys the produce of the field. That is the picture of the unproductive believer. We don't lose our salvation, but the works that we have created.

In another place, Paul talks about how you build on the foundation of Christ. Is it gold, silver, and precious stones that are fire resistant? Or is it wood, hay, and stubble, the big bird nest? He says in verse 9 of Hebrews 6, Beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, things that accompany your salvation, even though we speak in this manner. For God is not so unjust as to forget your work and your labor of love which you have shown toward his name.

In ministering to the saints and continuing to minister, we desire that each one of you show that same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end. That you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who, and listen to this, Hebrews 6.12, do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and through patience inherit the promises. Faith and patience lay claim to these

overcomer rewards and blessings from God.

It is no light thing how we spend our day. It is no inconsequential matter as we go through doing the normal daily chores. God didn't drop us in the midst of heaven for the rest of our life.

God didn't drop us in the middle of church for the rest of our life. God put us in the middle of people and places and things and circumstances and said, I want you to cope with these just like everybody else copes, but I want you to do it in the light of the word. I want you to do what you do as though you were doing it for me.

And it changes its complexion and it changes its value. It bears eternal fruit when we do it in that way. And it's a wonderful thing.

We spend the same amount of time, we do the same chores, but we invest in our eternal future. We do things that reflect the glory of God that pleases him and he is ready to recognize those who do so. It's such a simple calling and yet we get so short-sighted and so self-centered that we miss it.

And although we spend the same time and do many of the same tasks, it winds up going up in a puff of smoke and we end up in the eternal future with no possessions, with no place. Well how is this all tracked? There is a record that is kept in heaven and that's our subject, the book of life. Exodus chapter 32 is the first specific reference to this book.

Exodus 32 verses 32 and 33. You will remember that Moses went up on the mount to get the Ten Commandments and the rest of the law from God and when he came back down they were having a big party. If you've ever seen the Ten Commandments movie, you know how this all went.

So Exodus 32 verse 30, it came to pass on the next day Moses said to the people, you have committed a great sin. They did the golden calf, they had an orgy, they did everything except wait expectantly for Moses. Perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.

I will go up to the Lord. So Moses returned to the Lord, he went back up the mountain and he said, oh these people have committed a great sin and have made for themselves a God of gold. Now how does that compare to us today? None of us has sat down and hammered out a God of gold, have we? So we would think, well I'm not subject to any of this sort of situation.

But we really are. What do we put instead of God? What do we think is more important than living and doing for God? Not religious works, not holy works of ministry, just our normal everyday works. If we are doing them for our financial future, if we're doing them for our reputation among people, if we're doing them for ourselves to make ourselves not feel so guilty, you know a lot of times we know we've messed up, we know we've hurt people, we know we've done bad things that are not pleasing in God's sight and we think, well I'll do some good things and it's like

stacking up stuff on the other side of the teeter-totter, it'll sort of balance out.

And these nasty things I've done, God will say, well but here's some good things I've done over here and it will hopefully at least balance if not tip the scale in my favor. What we don't understand is when we do those things we're measuring with the human eye and with the human standard. Al Capone gave to charity.

The mafia funds schools and libraries and gives to charity because it's a great tax dodge. They do it for financial gain. They do it for influence.

They will promise politicians money and investments and enable a politician to get something done in the community so that they can have the politician in their pocket. You say, well but aren't the orphans and the old people and the other sick and afflicted around about us, aren't they benefiting ultimately from this? Yes, but do you think God is going to give any credit to the mafia or to the Colombian drug lords or to anybody else who performs charity for their own evil ends? No, there is no credit for that. And will people be benefited? Will orphans get clothing and shoes and an education? They may, but that's not God's measure.

Did the orphan get clothed? God's measure is what was in your heart when you decided to clothe that orphan. If you did it for a tax dodge, if you did it to gain a reputation, if you did it for influence, whatever reason you did other than doing it heartily as under the Lord and not under men, it doesn't count. It has no value.

Well, we want to be written in the book. So Moses returns to the Lord and says these people have committed a great sin and made for themselves a god of gold. They have put something else in the place of God.

They've elevated some other factor, something that appealed to them instead of serving God. They're not doing what they do heartily. When they're celebrating, they're not celebrating to God, they're celebrating to this idol.

We make idols of all sorts today. We can idolize a good opinion of people. We can idolize getting rid of our guilt.

Yet now, look at verse 32, this is our verse, Exodus 32, 32. Yet now, if you will forgive their sin, Moses says, remember what he told the people earlier, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin. Maybe I can offer myself in your stead.

That's what atonement is. Maybe I can make some sort of payment to relieve your debt. So he says, Lord, if you'll forgive their sin, if not, I pray, blot me out of your book which you have written.

Moses, we don't know exactly what this means yet, but we know that some kind of way, that Moses is putting himself on the line for these Israelites. He says, Lord, these people have committed this great sin. If you won't just forgive them outright, then blot me out of your book and

then forgive them.

Use me in exchange. That's what he told the people he would try. He said, perhaps I can make atonement.

Look at the next verse, the Lord said to Moses, whoever has sinned against me, I will blot him out of my book. This book is the book of the righteous. It is a book of the record of righteousness.

Now, Moses is not saying, Lord, send me to hell for all eternity and forgive these people. What Moses is saying, Moses has been faithful. Moses has served God in a self-sacrificial way.

Moses has been written into the book of the righteous with things that he has done by faith for the glory of God. And he says, I will exchange all of the good that you have written in the book about me. And maybe you can take that good and assign it to the Israelites.

Take my merit, my plus side of the ledger here, take it all. Blot me clear out of the book of the righteous. And take that righteousness and credit it to Israel so that you will not wipe them out.

Because God has threatened to wipe out the whole nation and make a new nation out of Moses. That's what's going on here. But Moses is not the Lord Jesus Christ.

He doesn't have righteousness that can be sufficient to atone for the sins of the people. That's why God says, those who have sinned, those are the ones I will blot out of my book. Now, does that mean nobody is in the book because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God? To sin and to be unrepentant leaves the sin on the book.

In both the Old Testament and the New, we know that to acknowledge sin before God is to have the slate wiped clean. It is unrepentant sin. It is unconfessed sin that stays on the books.

First John 1.9 is our New Testament verse that says, if we confess our sins, he's faithful and he's just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If you're cleansed, it has no after effect. It's gone.

It's like the dirt that goes down the bathtub drain. It has been washed away. David says in the Psalms, I will stand before the Lord in my integrity.

I will stand before the Lord in my uprightness of heart. This is the David who killed Uriah. This is the David who slept with Bathsheba.

This is the David who committed many a sin. And yet he says, I will stand before the Lord upright in my integrity. I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever, he says at the end of Psalm 23.

How can he say that? It isn't that David never sinned. David committed grievous, egregious sins. But David was washed and David was cleansed because he prayed the prayer.

Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Against thee and thee only have I sinned.

He acknowledged his sin. He says, I will be sorry for my sin. I will confess my sin.

And David availed himself of God's grace. No one, there wouldn't even be a book of the righteous if sin got your name blotted out. It is sin that remains.

Sin that is unconfessed. The unrepentant heart that refuses to acknowledge that an injury has been done to the word of God. Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot him out of my book.

That's the first mention of this book. We can go forward. Deuteronomy 9.14. You'll notice this book has been in existence a long time.

These are Old Testament passages. Moses is speaking here in Deuteronomy 9.13. Furthermore, the Lord spoke to me saying, I have seen this people. And indeed, they are a stiff-necked people.

What does it mean to be stiff-necked? They refuse to acknowledge their sin. They refuse to confess their sin. To humble themselves and say, Lord, I have sinned.

I need your cleansing grace. They are a stiff-necked people. Let me alone that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven.

And I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they. God said, their faith that they demonstrated when they splashed the blood on the doorpost. Their faith that they demonstrated when they marched out of Egypt.

The faith that they demonstrated when they danced for joy and rejoicing on the far side of the Red Sea after the Egyptian army was... Remember, Miriam and the women got the chimberls and danced. The faith that they have exhibited up to this point, I am going to wipe it out. I am going to blot out their name from under heaven.

This means their memory. Their memory as a people. Not only is he going to blot them out in heaven, but he is going to blot them off the face of the earth.

He makes the same... In this same book, if you go to Deuteronomy chapter 25 and verse 19, he talks about Amalek. You remember the Amalekites attacked Israel as they came out of Egypt and they were sort of defenseless and weren't able to defend themselves very well. And the Amalekites came and God said, I am going to get them for that.

He said, it shall be when the Lord your God has given you rest from your enemies all around in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget. Don't forget to make Amalek forgotten is what God says.

Blot out their memory from under heaven. To have your name blotted out of a book means the memory of what you have done is removed. God says, I will blot out Israel from under heaven.

Stand aside Moses, I am going to make a new nation. He says, you are to go into the land and utterly destroy the Amalekites and blot out their memory from under heaven. And you know, for hundreds of years, nobody knew that there even was an Amalekite nation.

And in the 1800s and into the early 1900s, liberal scholars argued that the Bible was not true because there was no such thing as Amalek. There had never been an artifact turned up. There had never been any evidence, no treaties, no manuscript evidence, no archaeological evidence whatsoever that Amalek had ever existed.

And it wasn't until the last hundred years that they had finally begun to turn up some archaeological evidence. Israel wiped out the memory of Amalek from under the face of heaven, as they were instructed to do. So, your name recorded means it's a memorial.

It is a remembrance. And to have your name blotted out means the memory and the remembrance is removed. You move forward to Deuteronomy chapter 29.

Deuteronomy 29, that last one was 2519. This is Deuteronomy 29, 18. Deuteronomy 29, 18.

God says, these people, you saw their abominations, these dwellers in the land, their idols which were among them, wood and stone and silver and gold. We know what God thinks of idolatry. So that there may not be among you a man or woman or family or tribe whose heart turns away today from the Lord our God to go and serve other gods.

Guess what? If we're not doing what we do heartily as unto the Lord all day long, we have turned our heart away to serve some other god. Whatever is not of faith is sin. And if we do something out of a selfish motive, because it makes us feel good, or we know it will impress someone else, or it is a part of our short-term, long-range plan for success, and we don't think about God and we don't think about how it fits into his plan, we are serving another god.

God says thou shalt have no other gods before me. What is a god? It is what motivates you. It is what you serve.

It is who you are trying to please. There may not be among you a man, woman, family or tribe whose heart turns away today from the Lord our God to go and serve the gods of these nations. And that there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood, so that it may not happen when he hears the words of this curse that he blesses himself in his heart saying, I shall have peace even though I follow the dictates of my own heart.

That is our Jeremiah 17, 9 heart, isn't it? Our heart says, I'll have peace. I'm doing okay. Even though I'm following my plan, I'll be okay.

As though the drunkard could be included with the sober. The Lord will not spare him, for then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse that is written in this book will settle on him, and the Lord will blot out his name from under heaven. What is the meaning of having your name blotted out? He's an Israelite.

He is responsible to God. This is not he's blotted out because he believeth not on God, or he believeth not on the Son of God. He's an Israelite.

He came out of Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb. He's gone through the waters of baptism in the Red Sea. He's been sustained by God's grace with the manna.

He's been preserved from perils and from famine and from avenging armies and all of the other hazards in the wilderness. But if his heart turns away and he consoles himself and says, I'm doing okay. I'll have peace.

I'm going to follow the dictates of my own heart. God says, I will blot out his name from under heaven. He's a believer.

He's saved, but the memorial of any righteousness that would accrue to his account is blotted out. That's what's at stake. Psalm 69, verse 28.

Psalm 69, 28. There is a mention of being blotted out. What is the context? These are the enemies of the servant of God.

These are the ones who the psalmist says gave me gall for my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. A foreshadowing of what happened to Christ on the cross. He says, let their table become a snare for them and their well-being a trap.

If people are going to turn away and become an enemy, if they're going to become a stumbling block for others, he says, let those things that they think are a benefit become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened so they do not see. Make their loins shake continually.

Pour out your indignation on them and let your wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their dwelling place be desolate. Let no one live in their tents.

Why? Verse 26, Psalm 69. They persecute the ones you have struck and they talk of the grief of those you have wounded. Here are believers who are under discipline from God.

They're getting their scolding or their spanking. They're enduring some suffering for righteousness sake here and someone is taking advantage of them and pointing out the finger and shooting out the lip. Add iniquity to their iniquity and let them not come into your righteousness.

Notice that again, verse 27. Add iniquity to their iniquity. They have unconfessed sin.

They have sin on the books that they haven't acknowledged. He says add more to that account. Add to that the iniquity that they're persecuting people who are trying to live for God.

Let them not come into your righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living and not be written with the righteous. Who's written in the book of the living? The righteous.

What does it mean to be in the book of the living? It means that you have got some spiritual production. You're producing the fruit of the Spirit. What does the scripture tell us about that? Love, joy, peace, suffering long, putting up with somebody who's obnoxious, putting up with someone who is in sin themselves, someone who is making an enemy of himself even though they're supposedly a child of God.

Long suffering, gentleness, not returning anger for anger, not returning hate for hate or spite for spite. Scripture says love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for those that spitefully use you. It's a hard thing to do.

We don't have it in us to do that. It has to be God's Spirit percolating God's Word through our soul to change us and make us into a person who can do that. Gentleness, goodness, faith, humility.

One of the reasons we get up on a high horse is that we think we deserve, we rate, we merit something. Humility, self-control. These are the fruits of the Spirit.

The righteous are written in the Book. When we produce those things, when we let God create and manifest that in our lives, our name goes in the Book. If we go off on a tangent and cease living for God, cease living heartily as unto the Lord, it's not our salvation that we lose.

It's our credit. It's our reward. It's our place in the Book of the Righteous.

Our name gets blotted out. Our attiboy gets wiped away. So the psalmist here says, when these people malfunction in this way, blot their name out of the Book of the Living and let them not be written with the righteous.

The righteous are written in that Book. Malachi 3, verse 16. What does it say? Those who feared the Lord spoke to one another and the Lord listened and heard them and a Book of Remembrance was written before him.

For those who fear the Lord and those who meditate on His name, God says, I want to record those names. I want to remember and memorialize those believers who fear the Lord, who meditate on His name. They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, on the day that I make them my jewels.

And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him. Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and the one who does not serve Him. He doesn't say the one who believes in God and the one who does not believe in

Him.

He says the one who serves. How do we serve God? It's our daily walk. It's our daily decisions.

It is the why of what we do. God will write our names in the Book of Remembrance and our name will never be blotted out if we overcome, if we persevere, if we're faithful unto the end. Luke chapter 10 and verse 20.

I mentioned this verse last time. The disciples come back. He said, I've given you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Nevertheless, don't rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. Rejoice that you are in the Book of the Righteous. Rejoice that you have gotten the word and you kept it.

You did those tasks that were assigned to you. You performed those duties that were your lot and part of your calling. Don't rejoice that you've been given the authority.

Rejoice that you've used it and gotten a place in the Book of the Righteous. Philippians chapter 4 and verse 3. I urge you, true companion, help those women who labored with me in the gospel with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the Book of Life. Paul's fellow workers that were faithful, that endured under difficulty and persecution, are those who are written in the Book of Life.

And you'll notice the next verse, verse 4. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. Kind of ties in with that previous verse.

Rejoice that your name is written in the Book. It ought to be a cause for joy and anticipation and a part of our hope to know that God is not unrighteous, as it says in Hebrews. He's not unrighteous to forget your work and your labor of love.

It's memorialized. It's written in the book. That's the book from which we will be judged.

All of those fruits of faith and righteousness count. They last. They reflect the glory of God.

And that is their real merit. It isn't that they reflect great credit on ourselves. It's that they reflect the glory of God, because it is a work of God.

We have no ability to produce that fruit unless we are abiding in the vine. And he says, Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

And it's the nearness of the future, the eternal future, that ought to continually motivate us to think about who we are and why we're here. Revelation chapter 13 and verse 8 is another Book of Life passage. We've seen that.

All who dwell on the earth will worship the beast whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Those who go for the beast and the false prophet and that whole system, the tribulational saints, if they succumb and sign up all of their righteousness, any that they have accrued is wiped out. They are removed from the Book.

Their names are not in that Book of Life of the Lamb. A lot you could say about slain from the foundation of the world is from the foundation of the world referring to written or to slain. You have a parallel passage in Revelation chapter 17 and verse 8 that uses this same language.

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 dwell on the earth whose name has 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. So, these whose name has not been written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world will wonder when they see the beast.

These are people in the tribulation. We, of course, are gone. Who is going to be uncertain? Who is going to not be able to interpret current history and not be able to discern who the beast is? The same kind of people who couldn't discern the genuine Christ when he was here on earth.

Regardless of their salvation status, if the Word of God is not cycling through your soul giving you insight and understanding, giving you enablement, giving you perception, being a lamp to your feet and a light to your path, you are not able to interpret your circumstances. You can't discern the better things without that light. And you're by definition not producing righteousness through faith and you are not written in the Book of the Righteous.

You're not written in the Book of Spiritual Life, spiritual production. Of course, the most memorable passage in this regard is when you get on over to Revelation chapter 20 where you have the great white throne judgment. And you have the throne in verse 4, and they that sat on them, judgment was given to them, the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus, because of the Word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, had not received the mark.

They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

Blessed and holy is the one who has an inheritance, who has an allocation in the first resurrection. The second death has no power. They will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

This all makes sense, doesn't it? That those who were faithful and have an inheritance, part of their blessing and reward package in the resurrection is the promise of not losing those gains and those rewards. They will be priests of God and of Christ. A priest is someone with a special

function like the Levites had in Israel.

They are a subset of the larger group with a special privilege and a special function, closer access to the presence of God. And they will reign with him. And that promise of reigning with Christ is a promise made to the overcomers in a couple of places in our letters.

Then you have the Gog-Magog rebellion detailed and the throwing of several things into the lake of fire. Verse 11, The great white throne, him who sat on it, from whose presence the earth and heaven fled away and no place was found for them. This is the perishing of the elements that melt with the fervent heat that Peter talks about.

The rolling up of the earth as a scroll. I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and the books, plural, were opened. And another book was opened, which is of life.

And the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, plural, according to their deeds. See, he gave up the dead that were in it. Death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them.

They were judged, every one of them, according to their deeds. Death and Hades go into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he's thrown into the lake of fire. Now, we think, well, certainly this would be a roster of the saved. But let me ask you this question.

Think about your chronology. You have the judgment seat of Christ. You have the first resurrection of believers, which is actually the second resurrection.

Christ is the first fruits. Resurrection number one is the Lord Jesus Christ. Resurrection number two, those who are Christ's at his coming.

That's the rapture. That's church-age believers. Resurrection number three, Old Testament saints at the beginning of the millennial kingdom.

At that point, all of the saved in the first 6,000 years of human history, whether they are Old Testament saints, church-age saints, or tribulation saints, have been resurrected and given glorified bodies and are functional and ready to rule. Who do you have left? You have people in mortal bodies who are going to marry, give in marriage, have children. You can have the child leading the lion and putting its hand in the snake's den and so on.

You have people dying at the age of 100 and being said to have died in their youth. You have justice. You have sick.

You have imprisoned. You have a lot of conditions on earth that are near ideal, but not ideal. There is the growth of the terrors amongst the wheat.

And then comes the end. Satan is loosed. The reason he's loosed is you have a huge number of people, as numberless as the sand of the sea, that have been born or have come to maturity in the millennial kingdom.

By the end of that 1,000-year-long period, you can imagine how many mortal people there will be who are not wheat, who don't believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have been biding their time and looking like wheat and conforming, but are not people of faith, who are not saved. And God is going to separate the tares from the wheat by releasing Satan. And they will be drawn to him like iron filings to a magnet.

And you have the Gog Magog rebellion. Why do you think God doesn't just throw Satan into the lake of fire at the beginning of the millennial kingdom? Why save him? Because he is going to be the magnet to separate out all of these who are not believers in God, who don't like the divine program, who don't care about the things of Christ, who are not interested in salvation, who have the same attitude as Satan and the fallen angels. They are all going to gather in the great Gog Magog rebellion.

They are going to be slain. There are others who have died. There is going to be a final judgment.

And at that final judgment, all of the remaining dead, saved and unsaved, are going to be judged. You have people who were in mortal bodies in the millennial kingdom, some of whom evidently must have died because the books are opened. But there is one category of people who have their names in the book of life.

To produce righteousness by faith, you have to be saved. There is no way you can produce righteousness by faith unless you are a believer. Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

He that comes to God must believe that he is and that he rewards those who diligently seek him. There are many books that are open. Why not just the book of life at the great white throne? Because you have people in different categories.

Here is the book of the millennial saints. Here is the book of the millennial unbelievers. Jesus told the parable of the sheep and the goats and he put the goats on his left hand and the sheep on his right.

How did he know who is who? They are written down in a book. Before anything is ever said, before he says go into the kingdom of the Father, before he says depart into eternal fire, they have already been segregated as sheep and goats. How did he know which ones to put on the left and on the right? They are written in the books, plural.

These books are open. Everyone is judged according to their deeds. Why is it according to deeds and not according to faith or something? Because with Christ on earth, there is no blessed are

those who not having seen, believe.

You have Jesus Christ, you have God incarnate, physically present on the earth. There is no excuse for not having both faith and works in the millennial kingdom because you are not dealing with the invisible any longer. You have Christ, you have resurrected glorified saints all around.

Well, we are running a little long, but I want to be sure and finish this point. Why do you have multiple books at the Great White Throne Judgment? Because you have multiple categories of individuals. I had long thought that there was nothing but the unsaved of every generation at this judgment.

But you have to account for millennial believers. Those children who were leading the fierce animals and playing with the snakes and so on at the outset have grown up and come to an accountable point and come to a point of belief or not believing. Where is their judgment? We know about the judgment for church age saints.

We know about the judgment for Old Testament saints at the beginning of the millennium. What about these untold numbers of wheat type believers who are those that are judged at the sheep and goats judgment and the wheat and the tares judgment? Those parables, of course, have been applied to the church age by most interpreters, but if you look carefully at the details, they don't match. Jesus explains the parable of the wheat and the tares and he says he will send his angels to remove from his kingdom all things that offend.

Well, that's just backwards of what happens at the end of this age. At the end of this age, it is the believers who are removed out and the unbelievers who remain to go into the tribulation period. And we're removed.

And we're not removed by angels. The Lord himself descends from heaven with a shout and the voice of the archangel and the trump of God and the dead in Christ rise, we who are alive and remain go. So that wheat and tares, and they say, oh, well, he wasn't being that specific.

Well, excuse me, but I think the Lord Jesus Christ never wasted a word. He never missed a detail. If he said he was in the heart of the earth three days and three nights, he was.

If he says he's going to send his angels and clear out of his kingdom all things that offend, that means his kingdom is here and there are things in his kingdom. When is his kingdom? It's the millennium. It's not now.

This is not the kingdom of Christ. Heaven forbid. Do you think this is the kingdom of Christ? There are people who do.

You have your progressive dispensationalists who think that Christ is sitting on the throne of his father David right now. All I can say is, this is not the kingdom the Bible describes. This is not the kingdom where the glory of the kings of the earth is brought to Jerusalem.

No. The millennial kingdom is the kingdom where these people are going to live and grow. And at that great white throne, that is the final judgment.

All unsolved cases are solved. All open issues are judged and resolved. You have the millennial saints.

You have the dead of every age that were unbelievers that have not yet been resurrected. The sea and Hades and the grave all give up their dead. Why? Because you've got different categories of dead.

You've got different ways in which people died and for different reasons that they died. They're all brought together and multiple books are opened. And all cases are adjudicated and finalized and sentences rendered.

And there are some who are told enter into the kingdom of the father. Shine like lights. There are others who are told to depart into eternal fire and join Satan and his angels.

It's all resolved at the great white throne. And the book of life is one of the books that's open. It's the same book that Moses talked about.

It's the same book that David talked about. It's the same book that Daniel talked about. It's the same book spoken of in Malachi.

It's the same book that the Lord Jesus talked about in the gospels. And it's the same book that is talked about in the letter to the church at Sardis. God takes note of how we live our lives day by day by day.

If we operate by faith like Romans chapter 4, Abraham believed God. It was credited to his account for righteousness. He quotes Genesis in that regard.

It's in the Old Testament. It's in the New Testament. It's in the Millennial Kingdom.

In every age, God keeps track of who operates by faith. He says, when I was naked, you clothed me. When I was sick and in prison, you visited me.

And they said, when did we do that? He says, if you've done it for the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me. The near term application of that is the sheep and goats. The Millennial Kingdom.

But he said the very same thing in the Gospels to the nation of Israel. It's the same thing in the epistles to the church. In every age, if you do what you do as though you were doing it for Christ, it counts.

Your name is recorded in the book of life, the book of the righteous. All of these passages,

Exodus 32, Deuteronomy 25, Deuteronomy 29, Psalm 69, Malachi chapter 3, Luke chapter 10, Philippians 4, Revelation 13, Hebrews 12, the church of the firstborn is enrolled in heaven. Hebrews 12, 23.

Remember when Abraham was talking to God about the possibility of destroying righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah? In Genesis 18, 25, he said, surely the judge of the earth will not treat the righteous and the wicked the same. And God said, you're right. I don't treat the righteous and the wicked the same.

If you can find 50 or 40 or 30 or 20 or even 10 righteous in Sodom, I'll spare the whole city on their account. God keeps track of the righteous. God already knew exactly how many righteous there were in Sodom because it was recorded in the books.

If we live in that light, if we remember that hour by hour, day by day, we will keep short accounts. We will acknowledge our sins and make sure that we are not those who sin and who have their names blotted out. We'll be sure that our faith is credited to us as righteousness.

And the Lord Jesus promises, if you're faithful, if you overcome by faith, I will not blot your name out of the book of life. That's a promise. Our salvation is not at stake, but our opportunity to reflect the glory of God, our level of service and function and blessing and reward in eternity is very much on the line.

Do we love the Lord enough to want to walk in white with him? Do we love the Lord enough to want to reflect his glory from our white and shining garments? If we do, we'll pay attention to who we are and why we're here and we'll do what we do heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men. Let's close in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for this revelation of the nature of things in heaven and in earth.

We recognize what your word says about your inerrant and infallible record keeping. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will keep us ever mindful of our opportunity and our responsibility to live our lives in keeping with your word, in the light of your word. We know that you've enabled us.

We have no excuse. We have your spirit. We have the light of your word.

And we pray that as a result of that, we will be motivated, we'll remember, and the Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified and reflected in our daily operations and decisions. We thank you for your grace and your faithfulness toward us. And we pray that these truths will live and be active and powerful in our souls.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.