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# THE BOOK OF LIFE

CHARLES R. SMITH

*Examination of the passages in the OT and the NT speaking of "the book of life" and related phrases reveals that early in the OT the "book" was related to recipients of conditional covenantal blessings. However, by the end of the OT period, there was the beginning of a change of significance pointing to the "book" as a list of the recipients of the unconditional blessing of eternal life. This significance dominates the NT use of the phrase.*

\* \* \*

## INTRODUCTION

SEVERAL frequently asked questions provide the framework for this introductory study. These concern (1) whether the Bible mentions more than one book of life, (2) whose names are written in it, (3) when the names are written in it, and (4) whether names are blotted out of the book.

### IS THERE ONLY ONE BOOK OF LIFE?

The Bible refers to several different kinds of divine records. Some passages refer to a list of names, some to events, and some to a record of deeds. Bible students have suggested a wide variety of classifications, but the following adequately summarize the interpretive options:

1. A list of elect saints, from which no names are ever removed.<sup>1</sup>
2. A list of conditionally elected saints, from which those who fail to endure are expunged.<sup>2</sup>
3. A list of true believers, from which the names of apostates are later removed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>M. Rist, "Life, Book of," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1962) 3: 130. I wish to express appreciation to my colleagues David Turner and Donald Fowler for supplying me with abundant bibliographic resources for this topic.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Shank, *Elect in the Son* (Springfield: Westcott, 1970) 207ff.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Shank, *Life in the Son* (Springfield: Westcott, 1960) 281, 365.

4. A list of professing believers, from which false professors are eventually erased.<sup>4</sup>
5. A list of all humans, from which the names of unbelievers are ultimately blotted.<sup>5</sup>
6. A "book of the living," listing those who are physically alive.<sup>6</sup>
7. A book listing those who are to be the recipients of covenant blessings.<sup>7</sup>
8. Books of deeds, reserved for use in judgment.<sup>8</sup>
9. Books of destiny which contain records of decreed events.<sup>9</sup>

The last two classifications describe those passages which refer to records of deeds or events, not lists of persons. Though there are other more general allusions, especially to records of future events (Ezek 2:8-3:3, Rev 5:1, 10:8-11), the following are the seven most important references to such lists.<sup>10</sup>

- Neh 13:14 "Wipe not out ["do not blot out," *NASB, NIV*] my good deeds that I have done."
- Ps 58:8 "My tears . . . are they not in thy book?"
- Ps 139:16 "In thy book all my members ["days," *ASV, NASB, RSV, NIV*] were written . . . when as yet there was none of them."
- Dan 7:10 "The judgment was set and the books were opened." (These are interpreted as books of deeds, not names, based primarily on the plural and the analogy with Rev 20:12.)
- Dan 10:21 "I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth ["writing of truth," *ASV, NASB*; "book of truth," *RSV, NIV*]."
- Mal 3:16 "A book of remembrance was written before Him for ["of," *RSV*, "concerning," *NIV*] them that feared the Lord."
- Rev 20:12 "And the books were opened . . . and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

<sup>4</sup>William Mitchell Ramsay, *Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia* (London: Hodder, n.d.) 385.

<sup>5</sup>Kenneth Leroy Kreidler, "The Book of Life: Revelation 3:5" (unpublished monograph, Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1959) 21, and John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1966) 82.

<sup>6</sup>E. W. Smith, "Book of Life," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, gen. ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, (revised edition; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 1. 534.

<sup>7</sup>J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (reprint; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956) 159.

<sup>8</sup>Rist, "Life, Book of," 3. 130.

<sup>9</sup>Jan Holman, "Analysis of the Text of Ps 139," *BZ* 14 (1970) 199.

<sup>10</sup>Except as noted, all quotations are from the *KJV*. Significant differences in the *ASV, NASB, RSV*, and *NIV* are always noted.

It should be apparent that these references to lists of deeds or events are not of primary concern in answering questions about the book of life. In answering these questions attention must be focused on those references which refer to lists of persons or names. The following sixteen references will provide the necessary data.

- Exod 32:32 "Blot me . . . out of thy book which thou has written."  
 Exod 32:33 "Whosoever has sinned . . . him will I blot out of my book."  
 Ps 69:28 "Let them [my adversaries] be blotted out of the book of the living ["book of life," *ASV, NASB, NIV*] and not be written with the righteous."  
 Isa 4:3 "He that is left in Zion . . . shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living ["everyone who is recorded for life," *NASB, RSV*] in Jerusalem."  
 Ezek 13:9 "They [false prophets] shall not be . . . written in the writing of the house of Israel."  
 Dan 12:1 "Thy people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book."  
 Luke 10:20 "But rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."  
 Phil 4:3 "My fellow labourers whose names are in the book of life."  
 Heb 12:23 "To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which ["whose names," *NIV*] are written ["enrolled," *ASV, RSV, NASB*] in heaven."  
 Rev 3:5 "He that overcometh . . . I will not ["never," *NIV*] blot out his name out of the book of life."  
 Rev 13:8 "And all . . . shall worship him [the beast], whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world ["written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain," *ASV*, essentially the same in *NASB, RSV*].  
 Rev 17:8 "They shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world."  
 Rev 20:12 "And another book was opened, which is the book of life."  
 Rev 20:15 "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."  
 Rev 21:27 "And there shall in no wise enter . . . but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."  
 Rev 22:19 "God shall take away his part out of the book ["tree," *ASV, NASB, RSV, NIV*] of life."

There is a general consensus that all of the NT references to the book of life, including Luke 10:20 and Heb 12:23 which do not use

the exact phrase, designate the same book. The real question concerns the interpretation of the five OT passages in the list above (Exod 32:32, 33; Ps 69:28; Isa 4:3; Ezek 13:9; and Dan 12:1).

There are some scholars who understand all of these OT passages as referring to the same book of life which is mentioned in the NT. But this is difficult to square with (1) the reference in Ezek 13:9 to not being "written in the writing of the house of Israel," (2) the apparent allusions to the loss of physical life ("blotted out of the book of the living," Ps 69:28; "He that is left in Zion . . . written among the living," Isa 4:3), and (3) the emphasis upon and even the threat of being blotted out of the book (Exod 32:32, 33, Ps 69:28, Isa 4:3, and possibly Ezek 13:9). In the nine NT references to the book of life, only one passage mentions blotting, and that one reference is best interpreted as denying such a possibility.

Perhaps the most usual interpretation of these OT verses (especially Exod 32:32, 33, and Ps 69:28) is that they are metaphorical references to physical life.<sup>11</sup> This is clearly the interpretation implied by the translation of Ps 69:28 in the *KJV* and *RSV*, and of Isa 4:3 in the *KJV* and *NIV*. These translations refer to those who are listed among "the living." In this approach, to be "blotted out of the book of the living" is simply a reference to the loss of physical life.<sup>12</sup> The *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* asserts that in Exod 32:32 Moses "meant nothing so foolish or absurd as to offer to forfeit eternal life in the world to come, but only that he, and not they, should be cut off from the world and brought to an untimely end."<sup>13</sup>

The greatest difficulty in understanding these OT passages as referring to physical life alone is the fact that being "written" is linked with righteousness, and not being written is linked with sin. In Ps 69:28, being "blotted out of the book of the living" is equated with "not being written with the *righteous*" (not with "not being written with the *living*"). In Exod 32:33 it is only those who have sinned (obviously in some very special form of rebelliousness), who are to be blotted out. MacClaren suggests that the blotting of names "is not only to kill, but to exclude from the national community, and so from all the privileges of the people of God."<sup>14</sup> The deliverance

<sup>11</sup>Ernest W. Lee, "The Book Which God Has Written" (unpublished monograph, Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1955) 24-28, 42-51.

<sup>12</sup>L. Kaiser, "Blot," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955) I. 490.

<sup>13</sup>"Book of Life," *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, eds. John McClintock and James Strong (New York: Harper, 1894) I. 852.

<sup>14</sup>Alexander MacClaren, "Psalms," in *The Expositors Bible*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (London: Hodden and Stoughton, 1893) 3. 182.

mentioned in Dan 12:1 may refer only to physical preservation through the great tribulation that is described, but it is usually understood as indicating much more than this.<sup>15</sup>

A much better approach is to understand these OT passages as metaphorical references to a book of covenant blessings. Lightfoot asserts that "the 'book of life' in the figurative language of the Old Testament is the register of the covenant people, . . . hence to be blotted out of the book of the living means to forfeit the privileges of the theocracy; to be shut out from God's favor."<sup>16</sup> The view presented in the *Self-Interpreting Bible* in regard to Exod 32:32–33 is very close to this interpretation:

God, to test and evidence his mediatorial qualifications, had offered to Moses, ver. 10, to make a great nation; but that honour he resigns, nay deprecates, for the sake of the poor ungrateful people whom he was sent to deliver, and prays that rather than be aggrandized by the rejection of the nation, he may be blotted, not out of the book of life, but out of the book of national genealogy, honour, and possession.<sup>17</sup>

Since the Mosaic Covenant promised blessings, including long life, conditioned on obedience, a person's name could be blotted from a list of covenant blessings if he failed to fulfill the conditions prescribed by the covenant.

This interpretation adequately answers the objections raised against the other views. It allows an analogy with the later references to the book of life since both books designate the recipients of special divine blessings. It also explains the emphasis on physical life, the reference to being "written in the writing of the house of Israel" (Ezek 13:9), and the possibility and threat of being blotted from the book.

In view of the preceding considerations, it is apparent that there is a unifying factor in all of the references under discussion. It is unlikely that any refer to mere physical life alone. Rather, all specify the recipients of special divine blessings. But it is also apparent that there is a progression of revelation concerning the significance of the concept. Though the early emphasis was clearly on physical life and temporal blessings, possibly by the end of the OT (Dan 12:1), and certainly throughout the NT period, the concept of a divine register listing those slated for covenantal blessings clearly indicated a list of those selected before the foundation of the world (Rev 17:8) for the

<sup>15</sup>Robert Henry Charles, ed., *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913) 2. 216, n. 3.

<sup>16</sup>Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, 159.

<sup>17</sup>"Exodus 32:32–33," *Self-Interpreting Bible*, ed. John H. Vincent *et al.* (Saint Louis: The Bible Educational Society, 1811) 352.

irrevocable covenantal blessing of eternal life (Rev 3:5, 20:15). While there is a degree of continuity, the change of emphasis requires the later book to be significantly different from the book of the earlier references. From this perspective one could say that there are two books of life, one being a book of covenantal blessings emphasizing the temporal aspects of divine blessing, and the other being a book of covenantal blessing emphasizing the eternal aspects.

On the other hand, since the nine NT references (and possibly Dan 12:1) establish the concept of the book of life as a book determinative of eternal blessings (a significance not implied by the earlier references), there is certainly only one such book. This understanding harmonizes perfectly with the translation of the *KJV* where the term "book of life" is used only in the NT and only to designate what may be called the "book of *eternal* life."<sup>18</sup> The OT book of covenantal blessings is labeled only as "the book of the living" (Ps 69:28, cf. Isa 4:3) or as "thy book" (Exod 32:32), "my book" (Exod 32:33), the "writing of the house of Israel" (Ezek 13:9), or simply as "the book" (Dan 12:1).

Thus, the OT refers to several divine registers or books. These include lists of deeds, events and names. When names are mentioned the reference is to those who are the slated recipients of covenantal blessings. Under a covenant specifying conditional blessings a forfeiture of these blessings is envisioned as a blotting from such a list.<sup>19</sup> The primary emphasis of this blotting is upon the loss of physical life and other temporal blessings, though the loss (or blessing of continued listing) may extend beyond the temporal. However, the NT focuses on the unconditionally covenanted blessing of eternal life.<sup>20</sup> The NT book of life, therefore, is significantly different from the other books that are mentioned and thus there is only one "book of life" which is a register of those chosen for eternal blessings. All of the following discussion will focus on *this* book of life—the register of the elect.

<sup>18</sup>Walter Scott (*Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ* [London: Pickering and Inglis, n.d.] 76ff) believes that there are two books of life in Revelation, one being a book of professors from which names are erased, and another containing only true believers. This view is contradicted by the unity of the book and misunderstands Rev 3:5. It will not here be further evaluated.

<sup>19</sup>This accords well with statements in Deut 29:18–28 about a covenant-breaker being punished by having "all the curses that are written in this book" (cf. Rev 22:19) brought upon him and by having the Lord "blot out his name from under heaven."

<sup>20</sup>A note in the *NIV* Study Bible (Kenneth L. Barker, gen. ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985] 857) implies this understanding of the progress in significance of the term.

## WHOSE NAMES ARE WRITTEN IN THE BOOK?

The most common answers to this question are: (1) all humans, (2) all professing believers, (3) all believers, including those who will fall away unto damnation, and (4) all of the elect.

The view that all humans are listed<sup>21</sup> requires a later blotting of the names of those who do not believe and thus is contradicted by the fact that names are never removed from the NT book of life (see below). It is also contradicted by Jesus' statement to the seventy-two in Luke 10:20. If the names of all living humans were written in heaven there would be no point in telling any living person to rejoice because his name is written in heaven! Casting out demons at the command of Jesus (Luke 10:17–20), while not a proof of election, would be far more comforting and assuring than that which is true of all humans! The same conclusion would be required by several other NT statements. Paul, for example, referred to his "fellowlabourers whose names are written in the book of life" (Phil 4:3). But if the names of all humans are in the book until removed at death (or later?) then all of Paul's contemporaries—including Annas, Caiphas, Hymenaeus, and Alexander—were also written in the book! On this premise, Paul's statement could not point to a distinction or provide comfort for believers. Furthermore, Rev 13:8 and 17:8 specifically refer to people still alive on the earth whose names are not written in the book of life.

The second and third views, that the names of all *professing* believers or of all who believe and then later apostatize are recorded in the book, also require a later removal of the false professors or apostates and thus do not fit with the NT data. Nearly all of the arguments and references used in objecting to the preceding view are equally applicable against these views. For example, if the names of mere professing believers are recorded in heaven only to be removed at death, or if one's name could be removed because of a failure of faith, or apostasy, then Jesus' remark about names being recorded in heaven could provide no enduring assurance.

The fourth view, that only the elect, those destined for eternal blessings, are recorded in the book, is the only answer that is consistent with the biblical data. This answer is required (1) by the fact that the other alternatives have been shown to be invalid, (2) by the biblical assertions that one's eternal destiny is determined by the presence or absence of his name in the book of life (Rev 20:15 and 21:27), and (3) by the answers to the other questions addressed in this article.

<sup>21</sup>Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 82.

## WHEN WERE, OR WHEN ARE, NAMES ENTERED?

This is probably the easiest to answer of the questions under consideration in this article. Only three answers are commonly suggested: (1) at birth, (2) at the time of salvation, or (3) at the time of election before the foundation of the world.<sup>22</sup>

Support for the belief that names are entered at the moment of salvation is not derived directly from any biblical statement. For example, without biblical documentation, Owen says that the answer as to when the names are inserted is "most unquestionably, when by faith in Christ, they were brought to realize their lost condition, and . . . were restored."<sup>23</sup> Support for this view is often derived from a theological reticence to allow a pre-creation election, and from popular hymnody: "There's a new name written down in glory, and it's mine, oh yes it's mine!"

The belief that a listing in a book was determined before the foundation of the world is specifically required by Rev 17:8.<sup>24</sup> This verse speaks of names written in the book of life "from the foundation of the world." Thus, it is clear that names are not added at salvation, but were recorded before creation. This fits exactly with other biblical statements. Eph 1:4, for example, states that God "chose us in him before the foundation of the world," or as *NIV* translates, "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons." In view of Rev 17:8 one could add, ". . . and recorded our names in the book of life, his register of those chosen to be the special recipients of his grace."

## ARE NAMES EVER BLOTTED FROM THE BOOK OF LIFE?

Obviously, there are only two possible answers to this question. Those who answer in the affirmative typically build their argument upon one or more of the following considerations.

<sup>22</sup>The belief that names are entered when physical life begins need not be considered here since it understands that the names of *all* humans are entered when life begins. Thus it has already been ruled out in the answer to the previous question. The book does *not* contain the names of all living humans.

<sup>23</sup>John Owen, *A Commentary, Critical, Expository, and Practical, on the Gospel of Luke* (New York: Leavitt and Allen, 1864) 145. R. C. H. Lenski (*The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1943] 134) also affirms that one's name was entered "when he was first begotten of the Spirit and of the Word."

<sup>24</sup>This belief may possibly also be required by Rev 13:8. In this verse the phrase "from the foundations of the world" has been taken by *KJV* and *NIV* as modifying "the Lamb that has been slain," but by *ASV*, *NASB* and *RSV* as modifying "the book of life." The arguments are inconclusive and in view of the unambiguous statement in Rev 17:8 they need not be evaluated in this discussion.

1. They understand the book or writing mentioned in Exod 32:32–33, Ps 69:28, and Ezek 13:9 as carrying the same significance as the NT references to the book of life. But it has already been demonstrated that while the OT book certainly foreshadows the NT book, it is erroneous to equate wholly the two.

2. They believe that the names of all humans or of merely professing believers are recorded in the book. These assumptions have already been shown to be unbiblical.

3. They believe that “the blotting out of names never occurs during this life, but at the judgment seat of Christ. It has to do with rewards not with eternal life.”<sup>25</sup> The clear statements of Rev 20:14–15 refute this concept.

4. They believe that true believers may lose their salvation. This may be founded upon a doctrine of conditional election, that is, the elect are those whose persistence in faith has been foreseen, thus allowing the possibility of regeneration for some who were not elected; or upon a doctrine of “corporate salvation” which effectively denies individual election. The *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* asserts that the fact that names are recorded in heaven by no means implies a certainty of salvation, “but only that at that time the persons were on the list, from which (as in Rev. 3:5) the names of unworthy members might be erased.”<sup>26</sup> In response to these ideas it is sufficient to note that only the names of the elect are entered in the book and that the never-entered names of apostates cannot be removed (cf. the argument above concerning whose names are written in the NT book of life).

5. They believe that Rev 22:19 and/or Rev 3:5 threaten the removal of names from the book of life. The interpretation of these verses is the crux of this issue, and the following paragraphs will examine their significance.

Rev 22:19 is probably the most frequently cited verse in support of the view that names may be blotted from the book of life. The support wholly vanishes, however, when one examines any recognized

<sup>25</sup>M. R. DeHaan, *The Lamb's Book of Life* (Grand Rapids: Radio Bible Class, n.d.) 17.

<sup>26</sup>“Book of Life,” *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, I, 852. A variation is suggested by F. C. Jennings (*Studies in Revelation* [New York: Loizeaux, 1937] 126) who has argued that Rev 3:5 views the book from a human perspective which cannot distinguish mere profession from genuine possession of salvation, whereas the later references are from the divine perspective. Robert H. Mounce (*The Book of Revelation* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: 1977] 113–14) avoids any consideration of the theological significance of the blotting by asserting that “it is hermeneutically unsound to base theological doctrine solely on either parables or apocalyptic imagery.” The statement is valid but it omits the equally valid point that imagery should be interpreted in harmony with other revelation—not just ignored.

English version other than the *KJV*. It is well-known among Bible scholars that there is absolutely *no* Greek manuscript support for the *KJV*'s rendering of this verse.<sup>27</sup> All of the Greek manuscripts have "tree of life," not "book of life." Rev 22:18, 19 simply affirms that unbelievers who rob this book of its authority by adding to it or by taking from it shall have the plagues of the book "added to" them and the blessings of the book "taken away from" them. Among the blessings to be withheld are access to the tree of life and to the holy city. The tree of life symbolizes the availability of eternal life in both the opening and closing paragraphs of the Bible. Therefore, though Rev 22:19 may be difficult to understand, it cannot be used as a basis for any doctrine suggesting that names may be blotted from the book of life.

The interpretation of Rev 3:5 is really the crucial issue in answering the question under discussion. The verse states: "He that overcometh . . . I will not [or "never," *NIV*] blot out his name out of the book of life." Many have concluded that this teaches that if Christians "are defeated and they die in their sins, their names shall be blotted out from the book of life."<sup>28</sup> But in addition to its theological problems this interpretation *assumes* (1) that the phrase "he that overcometh" describes a special class of Christians, and (2) that the statement is a threat of removal rather than a promise negating any possibility of removal.

It is more in keeping with the context and Johannine theology to understand an "overcomer" as a term meaning "true believer," or "Christian," not a mere professor. This seems to be the obvious intent of the passage. In Rev 2:11, for example, the overcomer is one who will "not be hurt of (by) the second death." This is true of all believers, not just of especially faithful or especially spiritual believers. Later the second death is equated with being cast into the lake of fire, which is possible only for those "not found written in the book of life" (Rev 20:14-15) and is not a possibility for any Christian. As Ryrie has noted, "An overcomer is not someone who has some special power in the Christian life or someone who has learned some secret

<sup>27</sup>The translators of the *KJV* used a printed edition of the Greek NT that was based, with several intermediate editions, upon the text published by Erasmus in 1516. When he prepared his text Erasmus did not have any Greek manuscripts containing the closing verses of the NT. Accordingly, he simply made up his Greek text for these verses by translating back from the Latin. For Rev 22:19 he had no Greek manuscript containing the phrase "book of life," and none has been discovered since that time. See Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (2d edition; New York and Oxford: Oxford University, 1968) 101-2.

<sup>28</sup>Apostolos Makrakis, *Interpretation of the Book of Revelation* (Chicago: Hellenic Christian Educational Society, 1948) 104. See also Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation*, 136-37.

of victory. John himself defined an overcomer as a believer in Christ (1 John 5:4–5). Thus every Christian is an overcomer.”<sup>29</sup> The statement of 1 John 5:4–5 is as follows: “For everyone born of God has overcome the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God” (*NIV*).

The grammar and context of the verse also suggest that Rev 3:5 should be understood as a strong promise denying any possibility of blotting, rather than as a warning or threat of an ominous potentiality. The negative involved is the emphatic double negative, οὐ μὴ.<sup>30</sup> It is not a threat; rather it is an emphatic promise that the names of overcomers (i.e., Christians) will *never*, under any circumstances, be blotted from the book. The same emphatic negation is employed in two of the other promises to the overcomers. Rev 2:11 says that the overcomer “shall not be hurt [“at all,” *NIV*] by the second death.” As noted above, this is a positive promise in agreement with Rev 20:14–15 where being hurt by the second death and being listed in the book of life are at opposite poles and mark the ultimate distinction between believers and unbelievers. Similarly, Rev 3:12 promises that each overcomer will become a “pillar in the temple of my God and he shall go no more out” [“never shall he go out of it,” *RSV*]. None of these three promises employing the emphatic double negative are to be understood as threats.

In view of these considerations it may be concluded that the answer to the question, “Are names ever blotted from the book of life?”, requires an emphatic negative—even a double negative (οὐ μὴ)—by no means!

#### CONCLUSIONS

This study has argued that the OT allusions to a register of names refer to those who are slated for covenant blessings, with a primary focus on the temporal blessings associated with physical life.

<sup>29</sup>Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1968) 22–23. Cf. James E. Rosscup, “The Overcomer of the Apocalypse,” *GTJ* 3 (1982) 261–86. J. William Fuller (“‘I Will Not Erase His Name From the Book of Life’ (Revelation 3:5).” *JETS* 26 [1983] 299) has argued that the reference to the overcomer “implies that the victory is on an individual basis, that not all Christians attain it.” He reasons that “a command that everyone keeps is superfluous, and a reward that everyone receives for a virtue that everyone has is nonsense.” The reasoning is valid, but the conclusion is not true since the argument is based on false premises. A number of NT passages make it clear that many who consider themselves Christians are not in reality such and do fall away. They are not overcomers.

<sup>30</sup>See H. E. Dana and J. R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1953) 172.

These references do not convey the full import of the later NT statements regarding the book of life. However, they foreshadow the later significance. While names could be removed from a list of recipients of temporal, conditional covenantal blessings, names could never be removed from a list of recipients of eternal, unconditional covenantal blessings.

On the basis of these considerations it may be concluded that there is only one book of life which lists the names of those who are chosen and predestined for eternal life. This book has never contained the names of all humans, or of all professing believers, or of "believers" who later "lose" their salvation, but only the names of all the elect. The names are not entered at birth or at the time of salvation, but were all entered "before the foundation of the world." These names are never blotted from this register.