

BLOTTED OUT OF THE BOOK OF LIFE

A Paper

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by
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BLOTTED OUT OF THE BOOK OF LIFE

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

The problem created by this verse is as follows: if the book of life contains a list of all those who are saved, then to be blotted out of the book of life would equate to a forfeiture of one's salvation in Christ. I think the problem with this passage is that, for years, we believers have just assumed that, since Revelation 20:15 tells us that whoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire, we just assume that the book of life contains a list of all of the saved.

Quite honestly, Revelation 20:15 deserves a second look. Here is the verse in our English translation immediately followed by the Greek:

Revelation 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:15 kai. ei; tij ouvc eu`re,qh evn tw/| bibli,w| th/j zwh/j gegramme,noj evblh,qh eivj th.n li,mnhn tou/ puro,j

The key to understanding this verse is to observe the tense of the participle which is translated "written." In the Greek it is a perfect passive participle. A basic rule of Greek syntax (as well as English) relates to how the tense of the participle relates to the main verb of the sentence. For example, if a participle is in the aorist (past tense), it puts the action of the participle antecedent (or before) to the action of the principle verb of the sentence. Likewise, if a participle is a present participle, then the action of the participle is simultaneous with the principle action of the verb. To make a long story short, the translation before us in our English Bibles would demand a present tense participle. However, the word "written" is a perfect tense participle which places the timing of the participle as having been initiated before the verb "found" which is the principle verb of the sentence. Any translation of this verse needs to account for the fact that the word "written" is a perfect passive participle. A more accurate translation to Revelation 20:15 would probably be as follows:

And if anyone was not found HAVING BEEN written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

In other words, it doesn't matter if his name has been blotted out. What matters to the person in question is this: was his name EVER THERE? The practical implication of this truth is that Revelation 3:5 becomes for us, not a threat of forfeiture of eternal life, but rather a threat of forfeiture of privileges that might accrue to the faithful believer whose name remains written in the book after the judgment seat of Christ.

Armed with this knowledge, let us now look again at our verse in question:

Revelation 3:5 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 My Father and before His angels.

The verb “blotted out” is one of four future tense verbs in this context. These are all future verbs because they describe the results of a future event, which is the judgment seat of Christ. In this context, those emerging victorious from the Judgment seat of Christ will have bestowed upon them at least four special privileges:

1. They shall walk with Christ in white.
2. They shall have a white cloak thrown around them.
3. They shall not be blotted out of the book of life.
4. They shall have their name confessed before the Father and His angels.

The very fact that not having your name blotted out of the book of life is a result of the Judgment seat of Christ should tell us that at least the person in question made it to the judgment seat of Christ. Moreover, anyone at the judgment seat of Christ is already among the saved. Whatever loss having your name blotted out of the book of life might suggest, it does not suggest a forfeiture of an eternal home in heaven. The person at the judgment in question has already made it there.

If the possibility of having your name blotted out of the Book of Life as a result of the judgment seat of Christ is not a threat of forfeit of eternal life, then what might it forebode to the believer with defiled garments? How about a loss of privileges in the age to come? One thing that needs to be pointed out in this passage is that it presents for us a contrast between having your name blotted out of the book of life and having your name confessed before the Father and His angels.

So, what might be the purpose of having your name confessed before the Father and angels as a result of the judgment seat of Christ? As in keeping with the other promises to the overcomes in the seven letters to the churches, the promises all appear to have to do with access to the center of the administration in the age to come. The angels are the divine bouncers, so to speak, in the age to come. Having your name confessed before the angels as the result of the Judgment seat of Christ is, in effect, the Lord saying to the angels, “This guy will be helping me call the shots; he is part of the divine cabinet; he is granted special access.”

This, by the way, is also in keeping with the other three promises of the context in question. For example, walking with the Lord in white might suggest walking with Christ in the midst of brilliant luminance, which one would expect to experience when conferring with Christ in the presence of His unveiled glory.

Notice also the phrase at the end of verse 4: “for they are worthy.” This cannot possibly be a reference to results of being saved, because being saved is not a reward for obedience.

Being saved is a gift bestowed upon the sinner who has embraced the work of Christ as that which merits his eternal standing before God. Being “worthy” is not the language of the gift of righteousness; it is, however, the language of reward for faithfulness.

A similar promise is made to Joshua in the following verse:

Zechariah 3:7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in My ways, And if you will keep My command, Then you shall also judge My house, And likewise have charge of My courts; I will give you places to walk Among these who stand here.

Once again, in the above verse, we see a special distinction in the age to come will be afforded to those who in this life were consistence in their walk. Joshua in the above context was standing before the Lord. In the age to come, faithful believers in this life will be afforded special status and responsibilities in the next.

Notice also the second promise to the overcomers which is found in Revelation 3:5: They shall have a white garment cast around them. This is the garment of authority, similar to a kingly robe. Like walking in white in the presence of the Lord, it speaks of promotion to leadership capacity in the age to come.

In keeping with the promises of promotion in the age to come, not having your name blotted out of the book of life must, by association, also anticipate a promoted status in the age to come. That is precisely what we see in one other context which mentions the book of life. Consider this following passage:

Revelation 21:26,27 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it that they may enter in. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Notice this above context grants the privilege of entering into the holy city only to those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. It appears that not having your name blotted out of the book of life also equates to special privileges in the age to come.

Having our names confessed before the angels is for the purpose of positive angelic attention being afforded to the person whose name is confessed. Be it an earthly saint serving the Lord or a glorified saint serving in the Kingdom, special angelic attention is to be afforded the one who experiences his name confessed before the angels.