

**Open Books**  
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We are in a sermon series called Open. Today I am preaching on Open Books. My text is Revelation 20:12 & 15, which speaks of the final judgment of all mankind. It says:

*And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ...If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

There are two future judgments: the judgment seat of Christ and the Great White Throne judgment. Everybody will stand before God's throne one day and be judged based on what they've done in this life. Christians will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ where we will be judged according to our works – not for salvation, but for rewards.

This passage in Revelation talks about the Great White Throne judgment. How were people judged? By what was in the books that were opened. What books, and how many are there? In my study, I found that some commentators believe this speaks of the books of the Bible – which show us right from wrong and will surely be used in the final judgment of all mankind.

But, in addition to the books of the Bible, it is clear that God keeps a record of our lives and holds us accountable for how we manage the time, talents, relationships, and other gifts He has entrusted to us.

In various places, the Bible says that God's record of our lives is contained in heavenly books. He has a record of everything we've done, everything we've thought, and everything we've said. We should be very concerned to know what these books contain, whether they justify us or condemn us. That's why one book is called:

### **1- The Book of Remembrance**

Malachi 3:16 says:

*Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in His presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored His name.*

I love this! When we who love Jesus sit around talking about Him, the Lord hears it and He writes it down. It's like talking about Him is a form of prayer. And God remembers those words that we say. Unfortunately, God remembers everything

we say. Jesus said in Matthew 12:36-37

*I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.*

It is so important for us to watch what we say. I'll not say anything more about that because I just preached on it. Just know that there is a record of everything you've ever said or done. And when we stand before God, who we really are will be exposed in His presence. Only what will stand the test of a direct encounter with a holy God will be left and rewarded.

Have you ever heard the expression "Face the music"? Here's how that phrase came about:

Many years ago, a man wanted to play in the Imperial Orchestra, but he couldn't read music or play a single note. However, since he had great wealth and influence, he was allowed to join the orchestra so that he could perform in front of the king.

The conductor agreed to let him sit in the second row of the orchestra. Even though he couldn't read music, he was given a flute, and when a concert would begin, he would raise his instrument, pucker his lips, and move his fingers. He went through all the motions of playing, but he never made a sound.

This deception went on for two years. Then one day a new conductor took over the Imperial Orchestra. He told the orchestra that he wanted to personally audition all the players to see how well they could play. The audition would weed out all those who weren't able to meet his standards, and he would dismiss them from the orchestra.

One by one the players performed in his presence. Every time it was the phony flutist's turn, he had an excuse. He was sick or busy. Eventually he ran out of excuses and that was the day he had to "face the music" and admit he was a fake.

Many people who call themselves Christians are just going through the motions of the Christian life. They attend church, recite Bible verses, and say all the right things. But in reality, they are fakes.

A time is coming when all of us will be called to stand before the judge of heaven and earth and "face the music." It is an appointment none of us can escape. No one will be able to hide in the crowd. The phonies will be separated from the true players. The sheep will be separated from the goats.

Knowing we will stand before God someday should affect everything we do and say today.

## 2- The Book of Sorrows

Psalm 56:8 says:

*You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in Your bottle. You have recorded each one in Your book.*

When God says He is near to the broken hearted, He means it!  
 He knows every sorrowful thing you've ever experienced.  
 He knows every loss you have grieved.  
 He knows every pain you've felt.  
 He knows every sad moment of your life.  
 And He keeps a record of every single tear.

It sounds strange to us to collect tears in a bottle. But these bottles really existed in history. They are called a lachrymatory, or a tear bottle. In ancient times, mourners filled bottles with the tears of mourners. Then they placed them in the tomb as a symbol of respect for the dead. The more tears collected in a tear bottle meant the deceased was more important, or more loved. Many of these tear bottles have been found in the ancient Roman tombs, but they contain nothing but dust!

However, God has record of every tear you have cried, and He has promised to heal your broken heart.

## 3- The Book of Destiny

There is a book in Heaven that contains our destiny and purpose in life.  
 Psalm 139:16 says:

*Your eyes saw my unformed substance, and in Your book all the days of my life were written before ever they took shape, when as yet there was none of them.*

This is quite an interesting Scripture. Before we existed, God saw our destiny and wrote in a book about it. He first wrote about our substance. I believe this has to do with our DNA – what makes us unique and who we are as individuals. It has to do with our desires our gifts and our abilities. It has to do with what we are good at and what we are not good at. All these things coincide with the destiny and purpose we were made for.

So, one of the best ways to discern what is in your book is to look at the desires, gifts and abilities you have. They will be clues to what you were made for. God put these gifts in you and put them down in a book. This is why the devil fights so hard to keep you from knowing your destiny and purpose in life. Ephesians 2:10 says:

*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

Notice there are things we are to walk in that were prepared beforehand. This refers to our books of destiny in Heaven. When we realize we are God's workmanship, we begin to realize how we were made and what we were made for and Satan fights that!

The second thing written in our books of destiny is the span of our lives. This speaks of the length of our time on the earth. It also speaks of the purpose and destiny connected to those days. God has ordained the length of our lives so we can fulfill all that is written in our book. It is our job to discover what is in our book and to fulfill it.

The Bible teaches that we will each stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account of our lives. This judgment will be based not on whether we did good things but on whether we did the "God" thing for our lives.

The Lord will reward only what was written in our books. May we discover all that is in our books and begin to live it out with a passion. I want my life to count for the Kingdom of God and to be a part of seeing His purpose fulfilled on the earth.

Here's the thing: God will judge you based on what you did compared with what He called you to do. Many Christians believe that only the ministers like Billy Graham who have touched millions of lives will receive the rewards in heaven. But God does not reward as man does, by popularity or success.

God will not judge you by how popular you are and how many people know you. He will judge you based on whether or not He knows you! There are many people who've done a lot of good things, but Jesus will say to them, "Depart from Me, I never knew you!"

God will not judge you based on how successful you are, but based on how obedient you are. We need to find out what God has called us to do and do it.

If God calls you to be a businessman and make a lot of money to sow into His kingdom, don't go into full-time ministry.

If God calls you into full-time ministry, don't go into business to make money.

If God calls you to be a stay-at-home mom and home school children, don't get a career – stay at home.

Are you getting this? We need to find out what God has called us to do and do it. That's what we will be judged on. There is a very interesting passage in Daniel 7:9-22 which says:

*As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took His seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of His head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire... A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before Him. Thousands upon thousands attended Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.*

*13 In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into His presence.*

*He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

Daniel then had visions of a boastful beast with 10 horns on its head. He was troubled by it and asked an angel what it meant.

*20 I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell — the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully.*

*As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.*

This passage shows a connection between the Books of Destiny and the courts of heaven. Notice that the court was seated and the books were opened. The reason for this is twofold.

First, the cases that are going to be presented are going to come from the books. Second, it will take the courtroom's operation to get what is in the books released on the earth. This is because Satan uses legal things to stop us from getting all that is meant for us. So, we must learn how to fight for what we were made for in the courts!

This happened to Peter in Luke 22:31-32.

*The Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”*

Now – on the surface - it looks like Satan asked for Peter and Jesus prayed for Peter. But when I did a deep search on the meaning of the biblical words – I found that these verses are using the legal language of a court of law.

The Greek word used for Satan "asked" means “to demand a trial.” The Greek word for Jesus praying means “to make a petition – as in petitioning a court.” This language is very similar to Job, where Satan – the accuser - tries to prosecute Job before the heavenly court.

Satan understood the purpose of God written in Peter's book of destiny. He knew if this wasn't disrupted, Peter would impact the world with the power of the Kingdom of God. His strategy to hinder this was to bring accusations against Peter. He was seeking a legal right to devour Peter and what was written in his book of destiny.

But Jesus stood on behalf of Peter and secured the destiny Heaven had prescribed for Peter. Here's how The Wuest Translation says it:

*Simon, Simon, behold, Satan by asking obtained you and your fellow disciples for himself and from My power to his, in order that he may shake you in a sieve as grain is sifted, by an inward agitation, trying your faith to the verge of overthrow. But as for Myself, I made petition concerning you that your faith should not be totally eclipsed.*

Wow! Like Peter, we have a destiny from God that Satan wants to steal! But we have an Advocate – a defense attorney in heaven! 1 John 2:1 says:

*We have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.*

So, when you fall or fail – remember that you have a lawyer in heaven! Call out to Jesus and he will plead your case for you!

#### **4- The Book of Life**

This is the most important book of all! It contains the list of names of those who will live with God forever in heaven. It is the roll of those who are saved. God keeps good records. He knows His own, and He has set the names of His children permanently in His book of life.

The book of life is mentioned many times in the Bible. I don't have time to mention them all, so here's a few:

In Rev. 3:5, Jesus promises the faithful in Sardis that He will never erase their names from the book of life.

In Rev. 13:8, we are reminded that unbelievers' names have never been written in the book of life.

In Rev. 20:12-15, we see resurrected unbelievers stand before the great white throne as books are opened in judgment, including the book of life; they are cast into the lake of fire because their names are not written in the book of life.

What a comfort it is for believers to know their names are written in the book of life, and what a shock it must be for countless unbelievers who discover that their names are absent from heaven's roll. That's because many people are trusting in their life accomplishments.

On earth their deeds may have earned a place in many great books – books of valor, conquest, heroics, discoveries, inventions, religious quests, political coups, scientific breakthroughs, medical advances, social progress, military campaigns, or legendary leadership.

Perhaps their names are inscribed on grand buildings, or chiseled into monuments, or painted on the hulls of ocean-going vessels. But at judgment time, none of that matters! The only thing that matters is that your name in the Lamb's book of life.

So, how can you be sure your name is in the Book of Life? Well – it's not a matter of good works! The books that are opened will show that we are all sinners who deserve an eternal hell. But the Book of Life shows the awesomeness of the grace and mercy of God that He gives to those who place their faith in Jesus Christ!

For example, consider the thief on the cross next to Jesus. There is no record of him doing anything good. We only know he was being crucified for being a thief. But he trusted in Jesus on the cross and Jesus said he would be with him in paradise that very day!

But what will judgment be like for him when the books are opened? When God opens the thief's books, it will primarily be a record of sin. In fact, 99.9% of his life will be sin, but that last page — the last hours on the cross — will be the record of the thief's repentance and faith in Christ. And he will be saved because He put His faith in the Lamb who was slain! Revelation 21:27 says this about getting into heaven:

*Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

So – that's the ultimate question: is your name written in the Lamb's book of life? If it is, you will be saved. If it is not, you will be lost forever.

How can you be sure your name is written in the Book of Life? Be sure you're saved. Repent of sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. Salvation is only for those who are written in the book of life. Revelation 13:8 calls it: *...the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

The names in this book are not saved on the basis of their deeds. They are saved on the basis of Christ being slain. When your name is in the book of life – it's not because of the works you have done – but because of the work Christ did on the cross!

Jesus said He was the way the truth and the LIFE – no one comes to the Father but by Him. Those who are in the Lamb's book of life are those who trust in the Lamb for eternal life!

You might go to church every week – but is your name in the book of life?

You might tithe on your income – but is your name in the book of life?

You might pray and prophesy - but is your name in the book of life?

Salvation is by grace alone, thru faith alone, in Christ alone, plus nothing, minus nothing.

So, put your faith and trust in Jesus alone as your only hope for heaven!