

By the Book: Are You Getting In?

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June 1st, 2025

Scripture: Revelation 20:11-15

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Introduction

If you want to visit the White House, it's going to take some planning. According to the National Park Service and official White House websites:

- You will need to submit a written request for a tour through your Member of Congress between 7 and 90 days ahead of the expected date of your visit.
- Upon arrival, you will be required to present a valid, government-issued photo identification (e.g. driver's license, military ID, passport, etc.)
- All the information contained on the written request (e.g. name, date of birth, city, etc.) must exactly match the information on your identification.

Simply put, your name is put on a list and that list, with your credentials, dictates whether or not you'll get in. If anything is amiss, no entry! Pastor Greg Laurie found out about this firsthand when he was invited to go a breakfast at the White House at Easter time, and through some miscommunication his name was not on the list of attendees. It didn't matter who he was, he wasn't getting in. Fortunately for him, the matter got straightened out and he was able to participate in this prestigious event.

The White House isn't the only place where admittance is restricted. While it may not have the same level of security as the home of the President of the United States, you're not going to just let anyone into your own house unless an invitation has been extended or you have a relationship with a specific person. Your home isn't open to simply everyone.

Access to the God of the universe is no different. Not just anyone is going to be allowed into His presence, but only those whose names are on the preferred list. Everything is going to be done by the book and that book is the Book of Life, which will be opened at the Great White Throne judgment at the end of the Millennium. What exactly is the Great White Throne Judgment? Who's involved and what happens there? What is the Book of Life and how does it relate to humanity? How does it relate to you? The answer to all of these questions will help you answer the most important question: when it comes to Heaven and the presence of God, will I get in?

Point no. 1 – Judgement Comes Eventually

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. - Rev. 20:11

- The Great White Throne is where God will be seated to judge all of humanity. The holiness of the presence of God commands absolute reverence, as John saw in an earlier vision.
 - *Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!" – Revelations 4:2-3,6-8*
- A sin-filled creation won't be able to exist in His presence, as earth and heaven are said to have "fled" away. GRK: Pheugō (Strong's no. G5343) which can mean to run away or to vanish, possibly indicating the burning up of the present creation.
 - Jesus said, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."* – Matt. 24:35
 - *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. – 2 Peter 3:10*
- People complain about the problem of evil. This will be the end to all debate about the subject.
 - *Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. – Psalm 37:1-2*

Point no. 2 – The Books Record It All – No Deed Unseen, No thought Unexposed

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. - Revelation 20:12-13

- Who will be at the Great White Throne Judgment? All classes of people, all those who have died throughout time, however and wherever they died, will stand before God. There is some debate on whether this will be just unbelievers, or both believers and unbelievers. My personal belief is that this will be strictly for unbelievers, as Rev. 20:4-6 differentiates between two resurrections, one for the unsaved and one for the saved.
 - *Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*
- The Apostle Paul also references a judgment “Day” for believers, where rewards for work done for the Gospel are doled out.
 - 1 Cor. 3:9-14 - ⁹ *For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. ¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have **laid the foundation, and another builds on it.** But let each one take heed how he builds on it. ¹¹ For **no other foundation can anyone lay** than that which is laid, which is **Jesus Christ.** ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ **each one’s work will become clear**; for the **Day** will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and **the fire will test each one’s work**, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but **he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.** (Note: this does not mean your works were just good enough to get into Heaven. This passage is for those already saved because of their position in Christ. Think of it like tickets to an event. You’re getting in, but you may not be in the front row).*
 - 2 Cor. 5:8-10 – In this passage, Paul is writing to believers about the resurrection and mentions the “judgment seat of Christ,” what is often referred to as the “Bema Seat”: ⁸ *We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the*

*body and to be present with the Lord. ⁹ Therefore we **make it our aim**, whether present or absent, **to be well pleasing to Him**. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the **judgment seat of Christ**, that each one may **receive the things done in the body**, according to what he has done, **whether good or bad**.*

- The Great White Throne Judgment, however, will definitely be the great come-uppance for all those who've rejected the saving work of Jesus Christ. There will be no hiding. All the deeds of men are recorded in "the books." Every thought, every action, and every time you had an opportunity to respond to the Gospel.
 - Jeremiah 17:10 - *I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.*
 - If you trusted only in your own power, then against that power to keep God's law is how you will be judged. And you will come up short.
 - Romans 3:23 - *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*
 - Jesus told the Pharisees in Luke 16:15 - *"You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God."*
 - Isaiah 64:6 - *But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.*
 - So, not just the obvious deeds of evil are being dealt with here, but the feeble attempts of mankind to justify ourselves apart from Jesus. This will put indifference to the Gospel to bed.

Point no. 3 – There's Only One Book That Matters

Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. Revelation 21:14-15

- One argument against God has always been, "how could a loving God send people to hell." First, hell was not created for mankind, but for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). Second, God doesn't send anyone there, they merely choose to go by their rejection of Him.
- Hell is a place of eternal torment.
 - Revelations 20:10 - *The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*
 - Jesus often referred to it as a place of "weeping and **gnashing** of teeth" (Matthew 13:42). GRK – brygmos: a grating of the teeth (from pain or rage)
 - Rejection of the Gospel carries a consequence, which is eternal separation from God.

- If your name isn't in the Book of Life, you aren't getting into God's presence.
 - Speaking of the New Jerusalem, the eternal dwelling place of God and the saved, John writes in Revelation 21:27 - *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.*
- It has nothing to do with your works.
 - Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23 - ²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"
- Don't miss out on Heaven because in all your "good works," you missed a personal relationship with Jesus. Here's just a sample of some things that won't save you:
 - Your church attendance
 - Your religious affiliation
 - Your baptism or confirmation
 - Your service
 - Your Christian music
 - Your knowledge of biblical facts
 - Your "Christian heritage"
 - Your giving or tithing
 - Your patriotism
- All these are good things, but they're not the best thing.
- "But I do all these things for Jesus." Maybe you were really active during last year's presidential election. You went to rallies and put signs in your yards. You contributed to a campaign and maybe even worked at local election headquarters. If you did all this, that makes you a supporter. But does that mean that if your candidate won that you're automatically getting access to the President? Are you getting in the White House? Of course not! Just being a supporter won't be enough. Being a "supporter" of Jesus won't be enough, either. He's looking for disciples. You've got to be part of the family to get in. You've got to be known by Him!
- Jesus wants your heart, not what you do for Him. He gave His life for us. That's what He wants from us. Our calling is not in what we are or what we do. Our calling is to love Him with our lives, our very being.
 - Deuteronomy 6:5 - *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.*

- What we do is an effect of that love. The action cannot precede the love. The love must precede the action, or the action is meaningless. The "do" without the "Who" is just "doo-doo."
- Matthew 7:17-20 - ¹⁷ *Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Therefore by their fruits you will know them.*
 - A tree must be an apple tree before it will produce apples.
- Jesus said to the religious leaders, *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness."* – Matthew 23:27
- Don't be nothing more than a whitewashed tomb. If Jesus isn't inside, then dead man's bones are all that God will find on the day of judgment.
 - 1 John 5:12 - *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*
- Jesus warned his disciples about what is really important in Luke 10:19-20 - ¹⁹ *"Behold, I give 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. ²⁰ Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."*
- The enemy is very good about distracting us from what is most important. This is to either keep you out of the Kingdom of Heaven or compromise your message/testimony to keep others out.
- Definitely do your good works. After all, faith without works is dead (James 2:17). We aren't called to sit, but to serve and make disciples. Just don't forget your first love, Jesus Christ
 - Revelation 2:1-5 NKJV - *"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless, **I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.***
- Keep this in mind: A good thing becomes a bad thing if it keeps you from the best thing. The best thing is a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Conclusion – Be Sure Your Name Is Written In The Book

- If you want to be sure that your name is written in the Book of Life, and that an eternity of peace in the presence of God is your destination, give your life to Jesus Christ.
 - John 3:16 - *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*
 - John 11:25-26 - ²⁵ *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*
 - John 14:6 - *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*
- All it takes is belief that leads to faith.
 - Ephesians 2:8-9 - ⁸ *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.*
 - Acts 16:31 - *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."* Note: your faith could lead to the salvation of your family members.
 - Romans 10:9-10 - *If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*
 - Romans 8:1 - *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.* Note: because you have accepted Christ, you are no longer under condemnation and are therefore not walking in the flesh (according to the sinful nature), but by the Spirit.
- Maybe you've been going to church for a long time, serving and being active, but you want to make sure that you're not just going through the motions. Ask God for a heart check. Don't be an "unsaved believer."
 - Psalm 139:23-24 - *Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.* Of course, God already knows what's in your heart. This is a prayer for Him to reveal it to you.
- The thief that was crucified next to Jesus had nothing but hope and a belief that turned into faith when he turned to his Savior and said, "Remember me." That's all that was necessary for his salvation. His name was written in the Book of Life. Will yours be?