

Luke 10:17-20

"The Book of Life"

April 13, 2025

1. Intro

- a. Well, if the Bible was any other book, we might say about our passage for this morning that it is one of the most frustrating omissions in all pieces of literature
 - i. We read a couple of weeks ago at the beginning of chapter ten, how Jesus gathered these seventy-two unnamed men around him
 - 1. He commissioned them to go out into all the towns and villages, healing the sick, proclaiming the Kingdom, and preparing each of these places for his arrival
 - ii. We saw last week that there would be many towns who would reject the message of the seventy-two
 - 1. In rejecting the seventy-two, they would be rejecting Jesus
 - 2. In rejecting Jesus, they would be rejecting the Father who sent him
 - a. And in their rejection of the Father, a judgement worse than the judgment poured out on Sodom and Gomorrah would be reserved for them
 - iii. So, Jesus sends them out with all of these promises...
 - 1. And we get ZERO record of anything they did
 - a. Remember, in addition to being a physician, Luke was also a pretty detailed historian
 - i. He not only compiled his Gospel in a very careful and accurate way...
 - 1. But he also did the same for the book of Acts,
 - a. Recording MANY of the acts of the Apostles after Jesus' return to heaven
 - 2. And yet, here, when Jesus sends out six DOZEN of his followers – followers that were given the power of God to do many mighty works...
 - a. We get NOTHING!
 - i. Again, if this were any other book, we would understandably be frustrated with the author
 - 1. But, of course, this isn't any other book, is it?
 - 2. As we talked about a couple of weeks ago in our Wednesday night study, this is the very Word of God
 - a. Not only is it fully authoritative, and every word in it fully inspired by God
 - b. But it is also fully SUFFICIENT
 - i. It may not contain everything that we would like for it to contain
 - ii. But it does contain EVERYTHING we need for life and godliness
 - ii. And apparently, God didn't think that we needed all the details of the adventures of the seventy-two for our life and godliness
 - 1. So we're simply left with verse 17...

2. Luke 10:17

- a. *¹⁷The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!"*
 - i. Whatever happened on their mission, it must have been pretty good overall
 - 1. They didn't return with fear...

2. They didn't return with anger or frustration...
3. But instead, they returned with JOY, for even the demons were subject to them
 - a. I think we can infer from previous passages that this must have meant they were fairly successful, not just in healing people, but also in casting out unclean spirits...
 - i. Just as they had seen Jesus do on multiple occasions prior to this
 - ii. And that, over all, the people had been receptive to their words and their works
4. And we cannot miss the fact that they recognized that this did not come from their own authority
 - a. All of this came about because of JESUS' name
 - i. So they returned with joy, reporting back to Jesus all they had seen and done
 1. And Jesus replied to them in verse 18...

3. Luke 10:18

- a. *¹⁸And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven..."*
 - i. Now, there are a couple of different interpretations of what Jesus meant when he said this
 1. The first is a NEGATIVE interpretation, as some believe that Jesus might have been giving the seventy-two a warning
 - a. "Be careful, my friends... watch out that you don't become PRIDEFUL in your success... for I was there in heaven when Satan fell like lightning out of the sky, because he too was full of pride... don't let your success go to your head"
 - i. I think it's POSSIBLE that Jesus could have been cautioning the seventy-two in this manner
 1. Certainly, he doesn't want any of his followers getting puffed up with pride
 2. But, I believe the more likely interpretation is the POSITIVE interpretation, as Jesus joins them in their joy
 - a. And in joining them in their joy, he reminds them that this is a spiritual battle that we are ALL engaged in
 - i. Whenever the Kingdom of heaven advances and gains more territory, the Kingdom of Satan falls
 1. Whenever people hear the Gospel and they surrender their hearts to Christ, they are delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the Kingdom of Christ
 2. Whenever churches are planted in areas of darkness under the control of the enemy, they immediately become beacons of light, shining brightly for Christ in the midst of enemy territory
 - a. In every single one of these instances, Satan falls more and more, and he is reminded that he has no authority whatsoever in heaven
 - ii. And all of heaven REJOICES as the lost are found!
 3. So Jesus joins the seventy-two in their joy, and then he says in verse 19...

4. Luke 10:19

- a. *¹⁹Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.*
 - i. Now, I don't want to spend a lot of time on this this morning, but it still has to be said...
 1. I DO NOT believe that Jesus was speaking in literal terms in this passage
 - a. Jesus does use similar language in Mark 16:17-18, when he tells the disciples,

- i. ¹⁷ *...these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."*
 - b. And we also have the account in Acts 28 when Paul actually does get bit by a viper, and he DOESN'T fall over and die, much to the surprise of everyone around him
 - i. BUT, this is one of those places where we have to use Scripture to interpret Scripture
 - 1. First, we have to ask, in the MULTITUDES of instructions that we as the church are given in the New Testament, do we find ANY Scriptures telling us to walk on snakes or scorpions?
 - 2. As Paul instructs the churches in worship, or the Lord's Supper, or the use of the gifts of the Spirit, does he list "scorpion walking" anywhere in his letters?
 - 3. As Peter and James and the writer of the book of Hebrews exhort the churches to pursue faith and virtue and godliness, do they say anywhere, "Make sure you prove your faith by picking up poisonous snakes and drinking poison..."?
 - ii. We don't get ANY instructions even REMOTELY approaching these things...
 - 1. Nor do we find anything in the history of the early church of them adopting or modeling any of these practices
 - a. So, either we've all been walking in disobedience these last couple of thousands of years
 - b. OR, Jesus was speaking metaphorically, NOT literally
- 2. And the metaphor is easily explained by the context...
 - a. The serpents and scorpions are Satan and his demons
 - i. As the followers of Christ clothe themselves in the armor of God, they are able to stand against the schemes of the devil, and wrestle against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places
 - ii. As the followers of Christ walk in THE AUTHORITY of Christ, they will continue to advance HIS Kingdom throughout enemy territory
 - 1. And, even though our earthly bodies may experience pain and hardship and suffering at the hands of the enemy, our SOULS shall never be harmed
 - a. For we are securely and eternally in the grasp of Jesus
 - i. Which leads us to the main point of this passage, verse 20...

5. Luke 10:20

- a. ²⁰ *Nevertheless, [Jesus says] do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."*
 - i. Jesus certainly isn't telling us, "Now, whenever you advance the Kingdom into the darkness, and you see people transformed and made new... make sure you are not joyful over these things...
 - 1. Keep your emotions out of it... this is just your duty after all"
 - a. Again, all of heaven rejoices when even just ONE sinner repents

- i. So we ABSOLUTELY want to rejoice when Satan and his forces are defeated in any way
 - 2. But our GREATEST source of rejoicing should NOT come from our spiritual victories
 - a. It should come from the fact that we have been saved!
 - i. We who were once dead have now been made alive!
 - ii. We who were once enemies of God have now been adopted into His family!
 - iii. And the evidence of our salvation is that our name is written in heaven
 - 1. And as we learn in other parts of the Bible, our name is written in THE BOOK OF LIFE
- b. Now, if you've been in the church for awhile, you're probably aware that there are some different beliefs about what it means that our names are "written in heaven"
 - i. We were at a youth event a few years ago where the main speaker gave an invitation at the end
 - 1. And after he led a handful of kids in the sinners' prayer, he joyfully said to them, "Congratulations, your names are NOW written in the Book of Life!"
 - a. So, according to this view, God has the Book of Life there with Him in Heaven
 - i. And at one point, this book was empty
 - 1. But now, every time someone accepts Jesus into their heart, God gets out his pen, and He writes their name in the Book
 - a. You believed in Jesus
 - b. You repented of your sin
 - c. You became a Christian
 - i. And NOW, your name is forever entered into the Book of Life
 - ii. That's one approach to this idea, but the reality is, the Scriptures simply do not support this approach – as we'll see in a few moments
 - ii. Another view is that EVERYONE'S name is written in the Book of Life...
 - 1. BUT, if we refuse to repent, and we refuse to believe, and we refuse to have faith...
 - a. Then our names will be BLOTTED out from this book
 - i. And therefore, our names will NO LONGER be written in heaven
 - 1. And we will have no cause for rejoicing
 - 2. Now, there are a few passages in the Old Testament that could lend some support to this idea
 - a. In Psalm 69, verses 27 through 28, David is writing about his enemies who have come against him and sought to destroy him, and he prays to God,
 - i. *²⁷Add to them punishment upon punishment; may they have no acquittal from you. ²⁸Let them be blotted out of THE BOOK OF THE LIVING; let them not be enrolled among the righteous*
 - 1. So that certainly SOUNDS like there's a possibility of the names of the unrighteous being erased from heaven
 - b. And then, in Exodus 32, after the Israelites make a golden calf, and Moses got so mad that he threw down the tablets with God's Commandments on them and they shattered, Moses returned to God and said,
 - i. *³¹"Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold. ³²But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written." ³³But the Lord said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of*

my book. ³⁴But now go, lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you; behold, my angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them."

1. Well, that sounds a lot more convincing now, doesn't it?
 - a. It's not just David or Moses talking about names being blotted out of God's Book...
 - i. But now it is GOD HIMSELF saying, with no ambiguity whatsoever, "Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book."
 - c. Obviously, that infers that there is indeed a book in heaven with EVERYONE'S name written in it
 - i. And, according to the Lord Himself, if you are a sinner, your name will be erased from this book
 - d. Jesus even seems to echo this sentiment in Revelation 3, when he addresses the church in Sardis
 - i. He says to them in verses 1-5,
 1. ¹"I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ²Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. ³Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. ⁴Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I WILL NEVER BLOT HIS NAME OUT OF THE BOOK OF LIFE. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.
 - ii. Again, that sounds pretty clear doesn't it?
 1. Those who conquer will NEVER have their names blotted out
 2. But by implication, those who do not "wake up," to use Jesus' words, will indeed have their names blotted out of the book of life
 - a. So is THAT how we are to look at it then?
 - e. Well, I would argue that there are some problems with this approach as well
 - i. The first is this...
 1. At what point in our life do we sin ENOUGH to where our names finally get blotted out?
 - a. Is it when we melt down our gold and throw it into the fire, and out pops a golden calf that we decide to worship?
 - i. Is THAT the line where God finally says, "ENOUGH!!" and erases our name from heaven?
 - b. Or maybe when we get so filled with hatred against the people of God, that we seek to destroy them as David's enemies tried to do to him...
 - i. Is THAT where the line is?

- c. Or maybe its when we hear the Gospel a certain number of times, and we keep refusing it, and therefore keep rejecting Christ
 - i. Is there a cutoff point where God says, "Sorry, that's your third strike. You're out!"?
 - 2. Do you see the major issues this approach creates
 - a. Ultimately, if we follow this approach through to its logical conclusion, we have to believe that EVERYONE is INITIALLY saved,
 - i. But WHEN WE SIN, our names are erased from heaven, and we lose our salvation
 - ii. Because we chose to disobey God, we are now blotted out from His Book
 - f. So where then does the security of our salvation lie?
 - i. It lies IN US!
 - 1. And that is an AWFUL distortion of the Gospel, as it makes the life and death and resurrection of Jesus pretty much unnecessary
 - a. I'M the one who has to work to ensure that my name stays written in the Book
 - b. I'M the one who has to strive to keep God from getting angry at me
 - c. I'M the one who has to keep ME saved
 - i. Friends, if that is the case, then God must have an endless supply of erasers up in heaven, for by this time, ALL of our names would have been blotted out!!
- c. So what then is the answer?
 - i. If the Bible gives no Scriptural support for God writing our names in heaven the moment we accept Christ...
 - 1. And if believing that our names can get blotted out when we sin leads us to an unbiblical view of the Gospel...
 - a. What then are we to believe about our names being written in heaven?
 - i. Remember, Jesus says that THIS should be the main grounds for all of our rejoicing in this life...
 - 1. So it's pretty important that we get it right
 - d. So what is the answer?
 - i. The answer is that, if you are a true follower of Jesus, then that means that God has had your name written in the Book of Life from the very foundation of the World
 - 1. Your good works don't get your name added
 - 2. Your sin doesn't get your name erased
 - a. According to His sovereign purpose and will... according to His sovereign grace...
 - i. If your name is in the Book of Life, it has been there since before the earth was even created
 - ii. We get our first glimpse of this in Daniel 12, as an angel – most likely the angel Gabriel – is explain to Daniel things that will happen in the future
 - 1. He says to Daniel in verses 1-3,

- a. *¹At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in THE BOOK. ²And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.*
 - i. So here in this passage, Daniel learns that there is coming a final judgment
 - 1. At this judgement, all who have died will be raised back to life, and they will stand before God, the Ancient of Days
 - a. Some will be raised to everlasting life
 - b. Some will be raised to shame and everlasting contempt
 - 2. And what is the determining factor of who will be delivered?
 - a. It will ONLY be those whose name is found IN THE BOOK!
- e. So, now with that in mind, we go to the Book of Revelation, which in SO MANY passages is simply a restatement of many of the visions that were given to Daniel
 - i. Let's start in Revelation, chapter 13
 - 1. In this chapter, John sees the great beast coming up out of the sea
 - a. This beast is given all sorts of power and authority on the earth from Satan
 - b. And it was even allowed to blaspheme God and to make war against the saints
 - 2. Starting in verse 7, we read
 - a. *⁷Also [the beast] was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, ⁸and all who dwell on earth will worship it,*
 - i. But note the distinction that John makes here...
 - b. *everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. ⁹If anyone has an ear, let him hear: ¹⁰If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.*
 - i. In the last days, this beast will come... most likely in the form of a man, or a governing body of some sort
 - 1. There will be a clear distinction made in those days
 - a. On one side, you will have those who worship the beast...
 - i. Those who side with him in his war against the saints
 - b. And on the other side, you will have the people of God
 - i. All whose names HAVE been written before the foundation of the world in the Book of Life
 - 2. But it's not JUST the Book of Life, is it?
 - a. No, it is the Book of Life of the Lamb Who Was Slain
 - i. Now THAT is a great title!!

- c. It is those whose names have been written in this Book since the foundation of the world who will be taken captive, for they will refuse to worship the beast
 - i. It is those whose names have been written in this Book since before the foundation of the world who will be slain by the sword, for they will refuse to bow to the servants of Satan
 - 1. And so John says to those who will face these days of great tribulation...
 - a. This is a call for endurance, saints
 - b. This is a call to strengthen your faith
 - i. For as Jesus said in Revelation 3:5
 - ii. ⁵The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life.
3. John again sees a vision of the beast in Revelation 17, this time with Babylon the great riding upon its back – the mother of prostitutes and of all of earth's abominations
 - a. And John marveled greatly at what he saw
 - i. But in verse 7, the angel says to him,
 - 1. *⁷"Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her. ⁸The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come."*
 - ii. Again, the angel makes a clear distinction, doesn't he?
 - 1. He tells John, "It is not FOR YOU to marvel at the beast
 - 2. There will indeed be MANY who will marvel at the beast
 - 3. But it will ONLY be those whose names HAVE NOT BEEN WRITTEN in the book of life from the foundation of the world
 - a. Those whose names have been written in this book from the foundation of the world WILL NOT marvel at the beast
 - i. In fact, we read just a few verses later that these will now stand alongside the Lamb
 - ii. And the Lamb will conquer the beast and his followers
 - 4. And he will have with him all those who are called and chosen and faithful
 - a. As Paul writes on Ephesians 1:3-4,
 - i. *³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD, that we should be holy and blameless before him.*
- b. If you are truly a follower of Christ, then the Scriptures say that God has chosen you, in Christ, before the foundation of the world

- i. THIS is why you can ALSO be fully assured that your name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life, from before the foundation of the world...
 - 1. Because, spiritually speaking, it was written using the blood of Jesus
- ii. This is REALLY good news for us, because as Daniel saw back in Daniel 12, there will indeed be a final judgment
 - 1. John expands on Daniel's vision in Revelation 20, as he writes
 - a. *¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is THE BOOK OF LIFE. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵And if anyone's name was not found written in THE BOOK OF LIFE, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*
 - i. On the Day of judgment, there will be multiple books opened before the Lord
 - 1. According to Daniel 10:21, Gabriel says that there is a Book of Truth, that has things inscribed in it that have not been revealed to us
 - 2. Thinking back to Psalm 69 that we read from earlier, David refers NOT to the Book of Life, but the Book of the Living
 - a. It is possible that this is a Book that God has that DOES have everyone's name in it, as a sort of record of everyone He has created
 - i. And when David is praying for God to blot out the names of his enemies from the book of the living, he is praying that God would end their lives
 - 3. It also appears from this passage in Revelation 20 that there is a Book of Works in Heaven as well, and all the dead will be judged based upon what is written in this Book
 - ii. But there is also the Book of Life
 - 1. And if your name is in THIS Book, you will NOT be thrown into the lake of fire
 - 2. If your name is in THIS Book, you will not experience the second death
 - 3. For your name is in the Book of Life of the Lamb Who Was Slain
 - a. And it has been written there since the foundation of the world
 - b. For you have been chosen in Christ since the foundation of the world
 - 2. This isn't just a promise for the Apostles, or for the super saints

- a. In Philippians 4:2-3, Paul writes these words, almost in passing, as if it is just understood by EVERY Christian in those days
 - i. *²I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. ³Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in THE BOOK OF LIFE.*
 - 1. My friends, EVERYONE who labors in the Gospel... EVERYONE who is a fellow worker in the Kingdom... EVERYONE who is truly a follower of Jesus...
 - a. Has their name written in the Book of Life
 - i. And according to Revelation 13 and 17, it has been written there since the foundation of the world!
- 3. And in Revelation 21, verses 22-27, we find one final promise as John sees the arrival of the New Jerusalem
 - a. ²²And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.
 - i. Brothers and sisters in Christ, there will be times when you will get to witness wonderful victories as the Kingdom of Heaven advances against the domain of darkness
 - 1. Those are certainly times when we can rejoice and praise our God in Heaven
 - ii. But there will ALSO be many days where you experience pain and suffering at the hands of the enemy and those who are aligned with him
 - 1. In fact, should we live this long, there will be many who will be taken captive
 - 2. There will be many who are slain
 - 3. There will be many who undergo a truly great and awful tribulation
 - a. And yet, we will still be able to rejoice, won't we?
 - iii. For the grounds of our rejoicing comes not in the fact that the spirits are subject to us,
 - 1. But in the reality that our names are written in heaven
 - 2. Our names have been written in the Lamb's Book of Life from the foundation of the world
 - a. In THIS, we can rejoice in the Lord always, regardless of our circumstances
 - i. For we are HIS!!