**Part A – Salvation, Part B – Judgment, Part C – The Ages to Come**

**A-1: Table of Contents and Introduction**
**A-2: Who Are God's People?**
**A-3: The Book of Life**
**A-4: "Second Chance" for Unbelievers?**
**A-5: Death and Hell**
**A-6: Salvation by Works? (Part 1)**
**A-7: Salvation by Works? (Part 2)**

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## A-3: The Book of Life

**As noted earlier, towards the end of the *Book of Daniel*, the angel Gabriel speaks about Earth's final *"time of trouble"* and tells Daniel that *"at that time your people shall be delivered."* Here at last were the words Daniel was waiting for. The Jewish people had been living as captives in the foreign lands of Babylon and Persia, and Daniel was anticipating their deliverance from worldly oppression and re-entrance into their "promised land".**

**At the time Daniel's understanding of what "deliverance" meant was confined probably to the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel – combined with the hope (premature) that their deliverer would be none other than the long-awaited Messiah. But the reality, as we understand from the New Testament (and from the Old Testament, especially the prophet Isaiah), is somewhat different.**

**The "promised land" is the Kingdom of God on Earth (with Israel perhaps being the location of its government headquarters), and its citizens will be the followers of Christ, drawn from nations all over the earth. And the Messiah (who came in the person of Jesus Christ) has already brought spiritual salvation to the human race – salvation from the oppression and captivity of sin, both in this life and the next.**

**As for the physical salvation, that is also on the agenda, not just for Israel, but for the whole of planet Earth – that glorious day when it shall be freed from the control of evil rulers. But for the time being, we will**

**have to wait for the (soon-coming) Return of Christ in magnificent heavenly power (spoken of in many places in the Sacred Book, but especially in Revelation 19).**

**Daniel's viewpoint has a parallel in modern Christianity: just as Daniel was limited in his perspective about the make-up of his people, might it not also be true for us nowadays? As explained in the previous post, maybe our perspective about who are "God's people" is much smaller than what God knows it should be.**

**To clarify then what is meant by *"your people"*, the angel throws in the qualification that they are *"everyone whose name shall be found written in the book."***

**And what does it mean, this mysterious *"book"*? Well for one thing, the *"book"* is an important sign of God's interest in human society. We human beings do not live in a void. Our actions in this life are not empty of meaning, purpose, or consequence. We may feel that way during our earthly lives when it is more difficult in this realm to perceive the reality of God's presence. But He is there, intimately concerned with us, and He has a *"book"*.**

**Books were rare in ancient times. Amongst the Israelites they could serve as a register of the names of members of the different tribes, or in the New Testament Age as a roll of the members of various churches. Similarly, God's *"book"* lists the names of those who are truly His people.**

**Furthermore, if God has a *"book"*, that should indicate to us that in some way records are being kept, and our actions in this life will not be forgotten. In fact, we get a hint of this later in Revelation 20. John the apostle observes that *"the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books."* (20:12)**

**These *"books"* are connected to and have a great bearing on who will get written into another book, the *"Book of Life"*, which contains the names of those who are truly God's people, His *Elect,* and are spared from any of the negative effects of the *"second death"*. This *"Book of Life"* would be the same *"book"* that Gabriel states has the names of the *"sons of your people"* who will be *"delivered"* at the end of Earth's final *"time of***

***trouble"*. (Daniel 12:1) But some are raised to *"shame and everlasting disgrace".***

> ***"Many of those whose bodies lie dead and buried will rise up, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting disgrace."* (12:2, NLT)**

**What does this mean? Certain Scriptures suggest that the *Book of Life* is meant for the *"overcomers"* who remain faithful, while those who turn away may be blotted out from the *Book of Life.* (Revelation 3:5, 22:19) That does not mean that they lose their salvation, for as Jesus clearly said, *"The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."* (John 6:37) So in this Age, to be written in the *Book of Life* means a person will enter the Heavenly Realm unashamed and greatly rewarded for their faithfulness during their earthly lives.**

**For those who never had the opportunity to have their names written in the *Book of Life,* they will have a "grace period", it seems, of 1,000 years. If there's a *First Resurrection* (Revelation 20:5), then there must be a second one. Those who never came to the Light before will have the opportunity to show by their works their repentance and readiness to embrace the Light. And if at the end of the Millennium, their names have been written, then they will take part in the *Second Resurrection* and enter the glorious Age of the *New Heaven and Earth*.**

**Those who take part in the *First Resurrection*, on them *"the second death has no power"* (Revelation 20:6). And they get to rule and reign with Christ, presumably because they are ready. They are the elite, the ones who followed wholeheartedly – like the five *"wise virgins"* in Matthew 25:1-13 (or like Joshua and Caleb in the *Old Testament*).**

**What then, it may be asked, will become of those who are as the five *"foolish virgins"*? Will some Christians be *"hurt by the Second Death"* as suggested in Revelation 2:11? Certainly, many will arrive in the Realm Beyond unprepared, not ready for life in Heaven, those who in some way brought *"shame and disgrace"* to the name of Christ (Daniel 12:2, NLT). But Christ promised to all those who've come to Him – even those who were disobedient; they were foolish, yes, but still *"virgins",* meaning they had at one time valued Christ above anything of this world – Jesus**

**promised that He *"will by no means cast them out"*. (John 6:37)**

**They may suffer chastisement, but chastisement under the umbrella of God's protection cannot be compared to the experience of being herded into the "lion's den" of separation from God in the *Lake of Fire.* Chastisement under the umbrella of God's protection leads to righteousness and peace.**

**Compared to being herded out of God's Presence into the *Lake of Fire*, God's chastisement is a thing of great value. *"More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."* (Psalm 19:10) A person has hope of reconciliation and release, and the sure knowledge that God is in control.**

**Such folks won't suffer the kind of *Second Death* that sends them to the *Lake of Fire*. Although the Bible doesn't give a whole lot of information about this, it is clear in Revelation 20 that many will enter a state of limbo until the *Great White Throne Judgment*. And there may be some delay before their names can be written in the *Book of Life* – a book that probably should be viewed as the registry of the *Elect* of God, those who are faithful to His plan for their lives.**

> ***But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,***
> ***to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,***
> ***to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant…***
> ***See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven.***
> **(Hebrews 12:22-25)**

**They will have to endure some kind of chastisement, which is not the *Second Death* (separation from God). But they will be in, what could be called, a Purgatorial Heaven in the Celestial Realm. The purpose of this orientation or rehabilitation program will be to prepare them for entering more fully into the heavenly life. And certainly, by the end of the Millennium, they will have returned to the Lord and righteousness.**

**But were not these people written in the *Book of Life*? Yes, but it may be that they missed the first edition, which has the names of those who *"lived and reigned with Christ"* during the Millennium. (Revelation 20:4) The *Book of Life's* second edition comes out at the end of the Millennium, and presumably, that is where their names will appear. That will be a great reward, of course, but to be rewarded, 1,000 years earlier, at the beginning of the Millennium is still the *"better resurrection".* (Hebrews 11:35)**

**Nowadays we have many ways of keeping records much more efficient than writing things down in books. But in those days that was all they knew, so that was the illustration God used in His revelations to Daniel and John. Yet we can imagine that in God's domain, the keeping of records, however it is done, is incredibly more advanced and thorough than even the most up-to-date methods we use nowadays.**

**By the way, the Lord is not telling us all these things to make us fearful. He just wants to let us know that it is well worth our while to make the sacrifices necessary to follow His plan for our lives wholeheartedly. Those who don't, they don't have to worry about going to Hell. But they should concern themselves with how will the Lord feel when they arrive before Him. Will He be ashamed of them or proud of them?**

**It is a great re-assurance to know that one is a member of God's Kingdom. Jesus exhorted His disciples not to rejoice *"that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."* (Luke 10:20) In those days, before the invention of printing, once a thing was "written", that meant it was, as we might say, a "done deal". Christ has lovingly extended to us the guarantee that we can never be separated from God, a guarantee which we may appropriate, even during our earthly existence. *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name."* (John 1:12)**

**In place of a vague hope, we have certainty, which saves us from having to worry about death and separation from God in some dreary existence in the Afterlife. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish* [be lost/ruined] *but have everlasting life."* (John 3:16)**

**This "guarantee" of our citizenship in the Kingdom is very clear in the apostle Paul's quotation from the Old Testament *Book of Joel: "For 'whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.'" (*Romans 10:13) And in certain statements that Jesus made: *"the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."* (John 6:37) That is, it would be preposterous to think that Jesus would throw out one of His children. The original Greek text uses a double negative expression (*ou me*) for the sake of emphasis.**

**The same expression is repeated in the Book of Revelation when Jesus explains to John that *"he who overcomes shall NOT be hurt of the second death… and I will NOT blot out his name from the book of life."* (2:11, 3:5) The word *"not"* used in these Scriptures is the same double-negative Greek expression used in John 6:37 and could have been translated with the same emphatic *"by no means"* phrase.**

**But here it is referring to the kind of salvation Jesus spoke about in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. The wise virgins who maintained their oil, in other words were faithful to their calling, were the ones called to the Marriage Feast. It's not as though the five foolish virgins were consigned into Hell, but they missed out on the Marriage, the greatest blessing they could have had. So make no mistake. There is a "judgment" coming for believers, of separation between those souls who are faithful and those who aren't.**

**This is what Jesus meant when He told the disciples to *"rejoice because your names are written in heaven."* (Luke 10:20). Probably that means "written in the *Book of Life"* – God's "register" of those were faithful to do what they could to follow God's plan for their lives. It is plain in the Bible that there is a basic difference in reward among His people who have become citizens of the Kingdom.**

**There are plenty of examples in the Scriptures: the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13); the End-of-the-Age Resurrection of those who go through the *"time of trouble, such as never was" – "some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting disgrace"* (Daniel 12:2, NLT); the times when Jesus taught that He would be ashamed of *"whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation"* (Mark 8:38); *"If anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."* (Hebrews 10:38)**

**At the final Great White Throne Judgment, at the end of the Millennial Age, there is a separation between *"those who have done good… and those who have done evil".* The one group rises *"to the resurrection of life"*; the other *"to the resurrection of condemnation".* (John 5:29) And likewise, at the end of the present Age (before the Millennium), there is a separation amongst those who have entered the Kingdom. *"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."* (2Corinthians 5:10)**

**But there does seem to be some confusion about these passages in the *Revelation Book* about being blotted out of the *Book of Life* or being *"hurt of the second death"*; and it is sometimes thought to mean that a person who has come to Christ could end up losing his or her salvation and get sent to the *Lake of Fire*.**

**But Christ's intention is not that at all. He has assured believers – those who have come to Him – that their Salvation is accomplished and can never be taken away – as Jesus taught during His earthly life. *"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand."* (John 10:28).**

**The phrase *"he who overcomes"* does not mean that believers must attain a certain level of perfection – sinless saints who never do anything wrong. If that were the case, no one at all could enter the Kingdom or get written in the *Book of Life*, and Jesus might just as well have said in John 6:37, "By all means the one who comes to Me will be cast out." But He didn't say that; He said, *"The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."* (John 6:37) And *"He who overcomes… I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life"* and *"shall not be hurt of the second death."* (Revelation 2:11, 3:5)**

**So then, what does the Lord mean here by the *"he who overcomes"* phrase? The apostle John explains it this way: *"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"* (1John 5:4-5)**

**Anyone who comes to Christ, *"who believes that Jesus is the Son of***

***God,"* has placed the world and what it has to offer into the background; he recognizes that there is a higher realm beyond this earthly one – one that is under the authority of Christ and far more valuable than this present world. And because he has reached out for it by coming to Christ, he has *"overcome the world"*. And those who have made this step, Christ promises that they cannot lose that victory, that salvation; they cannot be kicked out of the Kingdom, separated from God and sent to the *Lake of Fire.***

**Yet in the *Book of Revelation*, the concept of "overcoming" takes on an extra dimension beyond that of just basic salvation**

**Those who *"overcome"* get to *"eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God";* they receive *"the crown of life", "the hidden manna to eat… a white stone, and… a new name written", "power over the nations"* and *"the morningstar"*; they are *"clothed in white garments"*; they become *"a pillar in the temple of My God"* and the Lord will write on them *"the name of My God and… My new name"*; Christ promises they will *"sit with Me on My throne"*. (Revelation 2:7,10,17,26; 3:5,12,21)**

**Along with these are promises to *"not be hurt by the second death"* and to *"not blot out their name from the Book of Life."* (2:11, 3:5) And also certain stipulations: *"Be faithful until death"; "keeps My works until the end"; "not defiled their garments"*; *"Hold fast what you have"*; *"buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed."* (2:10,26; 3:4,11,18)**

**Evidently, these promises are for those who are faithful to the end. In Matthew 24 Jesus says much the same: *"the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."* (24:13, NIV) What does He mean here? Up to this point Jesus has pointed out that many will give up. *"At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other."* (24:10) It is fairly obvious that there is a big difference between the ones *"who stand firm to the end"* and those who don't. There are the *"wise virgins"* and the *"foolish virgins"*. There are those who are raised to everlasting life and those to shame and disgrace.**

**The conclusion? Those who are written in the *Book of Life* are those**

**who are saved to the uttermost because they have remained faithful to the end. If believers turn from the path, deny the Lord, they can as a result lose much of the reward that could have been theirs.**

**The following excerpt from a commentary on the *Book of Revelation* about the saints who must struggle through the *Great Tribulation* in the End of the Age seems to express nicely what is meant here by the term *"overcome".***

> **There are many mansions in the Father's house, many degrees in glory, and many ranks of saints as well as of angels. There is such a thing as being saved with loss, such a thing as missing our crowns even though we may get to heaven. There are also many "virgins," real virgins, who go and buy, and come at length with deficiencies repaired, but are in readiness too late to be admitted to the place and honor of the queen.**
>
> **…But still, they are approved and justified before God, which is in itself a great, high, and glorious attainment. To stand before God approved and blameless from the midst of a condemned world – a world given over to the powers of perdition by reason of its unbelief and sins – a world which has become the theater of all the consummated wickedness of the ages – a world in which it is death to wear any badge or adhere to any profession contrary to the mark of the antichrist, is an achievement of grace and faithfulness in which there may well be mighty exultation.**
>
> **(Adapted from *The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation* by Joseph A. Seiss, originally published in three volumes, 1870-1884)**

**The messages to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 do make a distinction among believers. To the church in Smyrna, Christ says, *"He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death."* (Revelation 2:11) A similar passage appears in Revelation 20: *"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."* (20:6)**

**To be worthy of not being *"hurt by the second death"* is a great reward,**

**and it certainly meant something to these people who were facing serious persecution and facing the possibility of experiencing soon their first death. But the Lord also said to them, *"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."* (Revelation 2:10) That is, to be faithful until the end of one's life, whether it be by martyrdom or by continued obedience to the will of God, this would result in being granted a *"crown of life"*.**

**But what does it mean to be *"hurt"* by the *Second Death*, or that the *Second Death* has *"power"* over someone? Well, if someone has disobeyed the heavenly vision, then in a sense they have trespassed into that realm of the *Second Death.* And what happens when a person "trespasses"? He or she will have to pay the price.**

**Perhaps the right way to look at this is to realize that Heaven does have its correctional regimes for those who need it. To endure God's chastisement under His care is a valuable thing and results in greater joy and fruitfulness and blessing. But to endure whatever the *Lake of Fire* has to offer, without the presence of God, will only bring misery and futility. So even if one must endure some chastening, he or she can be thankful that it is happening under the merciful umbrella of God's Kingdom.**

**Continuing with Christ's messages to the seven Churches, to the Church in Thyatira Christ said, *"And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations."* (Revelation 2:26) To overcome by coming to the Lord is a great thing, but to keep God's *"works to the end"* and to *"be faithful unto death"* is even greater.**

**And to the church in Sardis, Christ says that those *"who have not defiled their garments… shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy."* (Revelation 3:4) To *"walk"* with Christ implies a degree of intimacy and usefulness that other believers are not partaking of. The implication here is that some who were born again would defile their garments and would not keep God's works to the end.**

**Prior to Christ's coming, the certainty of salvation, this guarantee of entrance into the Heavenly Kingdom was lacking. Keeping the Law could benefit a person during their earthly life, but it held no promise for the Afterlife. When Moses came before the Lord to intercede for the children**

**of Israel after they had made the golden calf, he offered himself: *"blot me out of Your book which You have written."* But the Lord answered, *"Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book."* (Exodus 32:32-33)**

**King David made a similar observation: *"Let them* [*those who hate me without cause*] *be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous."* (Psalm 69:28, ESV) A person's wrong decisions and lifestyle divides them from those who have stayed true, and they wind up being erased out of the *Book of Life.***

**What Moses' experience in the Book of Exodus tells us is that only God, not human beings (like Moses), can decide who is to be written in the *Book of Life* and who isn't. And yet this is not a matter of predestination, for our being written in the Book of Life depends on us – our deeds and decisions.**

**Presumably, for babies, or those who die early in life, those who lack the moral capacity to knowingly sin against God, they cannot be denied entrance into the Heavenly Realm. However, they have lacked the opportunity to gain the precious experience of the earthly life. How or when a person crosses that threshold of sinning against God, only God knows. But probably it happens to everyone, *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23)**

**But thankfully, we can be *"born again".* Jesus explained in no uncertain terms,**

> ***Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* (John 3:3) *Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.* (Matthew 18:3)**

**If we, with childlike humility, choose to surrender, to step into being born again, then we are guaranteed entrance into the Heavenly Realm.**

**Christ's coming brought a major upgrade in our standing with the Almighty. As outlined above, by coming to Him, a person gains an iron-clad guarantee of *"everlasting life"*; he or she *"has passed from death***

***into life"*** **and** ***"will by no means*** **[be]** ***cast out."*** **(John 5:24, 6:37) We belong now to the family of God, which resembles (and far surpasses) the kind of comfort and assurance we experience in our earthly families.**

**And when a person comes to Christ, then a certain amount of pre-destination kicks in. At this point a person is predestined for the Kingdom.**

**And even in the Afterlife, there is opportunity for souls to enter the Kingdom. References in Revelation 20 bring to light the fact that during the Millennium era, all those who have died and are in various holding cells in the spirit realm will have opportunity to show by their works at the Final Judgment whether or not they are worthy to have their names written in the *Book of Life* – at which time they are granted entrance into the realm of the *New Heaven and Earth*. (This is a big subject to be explored later.)**

**Here is a question to ponder: if one has come to the Lord and as a result will *"in no wise"* be *"cast out"*, does that mean a person can just do whatever mischievous things he or she wants to and not worry because they are guaranteed a place in Heaven? This is a question that the early apostles were faced with from time to time:**

> ***What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*** **(Romans 6:1-2)**
>
> ***You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.*** **(James 2:24)**

**The consequences for those who misuse the grace of God, who have *"insulted the spirit of grace"* can be serious, as noted in Hebrews, chapter 10:**

> ***For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.*** **(Hebrews 10:29,26-27)**

**As we shall learn further ahead, Heaven has plenty of room for correctional regimes for those who need it. And in this life too, God's**

**blessings and favor in our lives depend a great deal on our obedience to what He expects of us. So, yes, we can still do what we want and not let God play His role in our lives. But to play the game of life that way, is not playing it very smart. Better to do as some who lived the life of faith,*"not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection."* (Hebrews 11:35)**

**When a person comes to Christ, a new bond of trust is forged. *"No longer do I call you servants… but I have called you friends."* (John 15:15) Love without trust is not real love. Because *"God so loved the world,"* because He showed so much love by appearing in human form and sacrificing Himself for our sakes, we have every reason to trust Him. (John 3:16) That bond of trust, from God's side, is undergirded by His guarantee of entrance into the Kingdom.**

**From our side, by the re-orientation of our lives into a positive direction and submission to God's rule in our lives. And through the power of the Holy Spirit and with knowledge of His mercy and forgiveness, we are given the inspiration and power to carry out this obligation, our side of the deal – to want to move away from the Darkness, not just out of duty or fear, but out of our love for God.**

**God trusts us to abide in Him and bring forth fruit, and we trust in Him to grant us entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. In theological terms, that deal is known as the *"new covenant".* (Jeremiah 31:31, Matthew 26:28, and several others) And even if we don't keep our side of the deal, God will still keep His. *"If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself."* (2Timothy 2:13)**

**To conclude, perhaps we can sum it up like this: everyone who comes to the Lord is written in the *Book of Life*. The Scriptures do seem to indicate, however, that it is possible for one's name to be erased from it. How or when a person crosses that threshold through continued disobedience, we don't know. Anyway, maybe it would be accurate to think that a name can be blotted out from the *Book of Life's* first edition – delayed until the end of the Millennium – and re-written in the second edition.**

**Whatever the case, we are comforted in knowing this, that by coming to Christ we have the guarantee of citizenship in the Kingdom, regardless**

**of what we have done before, or even what we may do after our being *"born again"* into the Kingdom. (John 3:3,5)**

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**Some further information about that often-misunderstood phrase *"blot out his name from the Book of Life"*:**

**It was a custom in ancient times to erase the names in a city's register of those who had died, even those with criminal convictions. Or in the case of the churches, to erase the names from their registers of those who fell away, had committed crimes, got excommunicated, etc.**

**From His viewpoint, looking at church fellowships (such as the Sardis church of Revelation 3:1-6), God might see that some, who are enrolled as "members" and may even be esteemed as honorable members of a church, had joined merely for selfish reasons – political expediency, material gain, social advancement, or whatever it may be.**

**But they had not entered the Kingdom wholeheartedly; they were not "members" of the real Church – *"the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven… the spirits of just men made perfect."* (Hebrews 12:23) As such, they were no different from those members who had committed crimes, were excommunicated, and thus "blotted out" from the church's registry.**

**These hypocritical church members *"have a name"* that they are *"alive"*, but in reality they *"are dead"* because their spiritual re-birth, if they even had any, had become a still-birth. (Revelation 3:1) They were not real believers (or overcomers).**

**For them their religious observance was just a going-through-the-motions exercise for mere gain. As a result, even though enrolled in a church's registry book, as far as the *Book of Life* is concerned, their names were never written in it, or their names were just "blotted out". Despite being a member of a church, even *"born again",* they were not the kind of overcomers whose faithfulness could be rewarded lavishly.**

**We can take note of the apostle Peter's sentence against Ananias and**

**Saphira who tried to join the Early Church for the wrong reasons. (Acts 5:1-11) Such "members" who, even though by all appearances may be registered and approved members of a church during their earthly lives, are not real members. God, who sees the hearts of His creations and does not judge by outward appearance, knows who are living for Him in truth, *"registered in heaven"*, and those who are not.**

**The message to the Sardis church ends with the same *"he who overcomes"* phrase found in Christ's messages to all the churches. It is a message of encouragement, and in the case of the Sardis church, much needed after the stern admonishment given to them. It promises that whoever are *"worthy"* and *"have not defiled their garments",* the Lord *"will not blot out his name from the Book of Life."* (Revelation 3:5)**

**Even those who have *"defiled their garments",* they will have further opportunity to regain their *Book of Life* privilege. For we learn in 1John 3:9, *"No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God."* (ESV)**

**Presumably, one who is truly *"born again"* starts off with their name written in the *Book of Life.* And even if they forfeit it, it would seem logical, because they are born again and can't continue sinning, they could re-gain their *Book of Life* clearance. But it would be after much hardship or in the Afterlife, by which time much of the reward that could have been theirs will be lost.**

**How much better, though, and wiser, to endure hardship now and be rewarded than to endure the consequences that will come for taking what appears to be the easy, safer route through the earthly life.**

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**Continue to A-4: "Second Chance" for Unbelievers?**