

The "New" Church of God Messenger
A Newsletter for the People of God
August 27, 2022 --- Issue No. 82
Special Edition

The Book(s) of Life
(Copyright) by Nathaniel Burson
(Big Sandy, Texas)

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Publisher: Church of God, Bismarck, Darwin & Laura Lee, **Editor:** Laura Lee, **Assistant Editor:** Darwin Lee We do not necessarily agree with all contributors, or their works submitted and printed in this newsletter. It is up to you to get out your Bible and see whether these things are true. Iron sharpens Iron

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Articles
(Over 4 Pages Long)

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This is another one of those questions that explains the inner workings of reality and salvation on a level that is quite astounding. We tend to take the things we see in scripture at face value and assign anything we don't understand to "the awesome power of God". But the more you study the Bible and get to know the mind of God, you see that each of these things functions according to a set of laws; and each of them follows a pattern, and an exact scientific process.

Matthew 10:29 *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.*

Have you ever wondered... HOW does God know how many hairs are on your head? Does He have a contingent of Angels following you around, with nothing better to do than keep a running count of your hairs? And HOW does he know when a sparrow dies – does He just "KNOW" (wimpy, cop-out answer) or does He have angels with titles like "Vice president of the bird kingdom in charge of sparrow-counting"?

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I have asked many far-out and wild questions in my time, and I've yet to find one that the Bible doesn't tell us the answer, or at least give us enough implications to reason it out for ourselves if we know God and the laws He lives by well enough. So, let's talk about the Book of Life.

Psalms 139:13-16 *For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.*

We are all familiar with part of that verse – that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made”, but I have never heard the rest of it quoted. The last verse is a bit unclear in the KJV....

(YLT) 16 *Mine unformed substance Thine eyes saw, And on Thy book all of them are written, The days they were formed—And not one among them.*

What these verses describe is the actual workings by which God designs each of us. A design done “in the day they were formed, BEFORE ANY OF THEM WERE MADE”. In that day, presumably at conception, God designs a new body and writes it down in “His book”, which can only be the book of life.

This is the clearest explanation of exactly WHAT God's “book” is used for. It isn't merely a roster of the names of the righteous, but it is a BLUEPRINT – a place where God keeps track of your legs and arms and stuff, and how they all get plugged in, in case He needs to renovate you. You might say that these are His technical notes from when He designed you, just like any good scientist would keep.

And, just like any scientist, when He is absolutely certain He won't need those notes again, because He'll never be repeating that experiment or ever need to know how Fred was put together again... He erases him.

Psalms 69:25-28 *Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents. For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.*

According to the commentators – whom I put little stock in, except for the occasional historical fact – the idea of a “book of life” was essentially a scroll that armies wrote names in when they got new conscripts and blotted names out when they died.

“The phrase, “the book of life,” is a Jewish phrase, and refers originally to a record or catalogue of names, as the roll of an army. It then means to be among the living, as the name of an individual would be erased from a catalogue when he was deceased.” <Barnes New Testament Notes>

If this is right, then it means that the book of life has the names of those people who are... living. When they die they are blotted out of the book. Hence the name... book of life... yeah. Anyway.

Exodus 32:33 *And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.*

God here tells Moses that whoever sins against Him would be blotted out of the book. Or, in other words, that “the wages of Sin is being blotted out of the Book of Life”. This seems to imply that we are written out of the Book of Life when we first sin...

But we know that the wages of sin is death, and yet we aren't killed for our first sin. And HOW does God delay giving us that penalty for often 70-80 years or so?

Romans 5:20 *Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:*

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The law entered so that sin could abound; so that we could earn that payment of death. But where sin abounded... Grace abounded! So, God, through grace, kept from delivering the penalty of death to all of mankind at their first sin!

Acts 17:30 *And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:*

And with the same mechanism He was able to postpone delivery of the OTHER penalty of sin, being blotted out of the book of life! Through their ignorance, God was, and is, able to apply grace to cover their sins of ignorance; if however, we learn a certain amount of truth and then turn against it, God pulls back that grace and allows us to receive the payment for that act – death and blotting from the book of life. Which, when you think about it, are really the same thing. After all, what logic is there in being written in “the book of the living” after you are... no longer living?

1 Corinthians 13:12 *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

The good news is that God prevents us from ever knowing so much that we have zero grace left and can commit a sin that will earn us eternal death, or a permanent white-outing from the book of life.

Revelation 20:12-15 *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: **and another book was opened, which is the book of life:** and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. **And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.***

But if a physical death results in our being blotted out of the book of life, how is it that God hunts through the second resurrection people for those who might have their name in the book of life? How did these people ALL get kicked out of the book of life (die) and then at LEAST some SOME of them wind up back in it?

We could phrase it differently and ask how it is that those who died wound up alive again? By the grace of God, it would seem; so, then if God is able to give life to those who died, He can write someone's name back into the book of life, so they can live a physical life again. But here it gets interesting. This scripture is the time frame of the end of the second resurrection, which doesn't *begin* until a thousand years AFTER the firstfruits are resurrected.

This means that the book of life is NOT reserved for the firstfruits, because there will be no firstfruits who need judging then! Why resurrect the second fruits, in the Great White Throne period, just to hunt for people whose names are in the book of life, IF ONLY FIRSTFRUITS ARE IN IT!

Exodus 32:31-33 *And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the LORD said unto Moses, **Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.***

And there could have been no danger of the Ancient Israelites being blotted out of God's Book unless THEY WERE ALREADY IN IT! And so, if unsaved, ancient Israelites are in that Book, then it appears that everyone living must be in it. That God keeps a copy of everyone's blueprints, until they commit the unpardonable sin, and when that happens, He blots them out.

But if everyone is in THIS book, this “book of the living”, then what is so special that Jesus tells His disciples:

Luke 10:20 *Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; **but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.***

Here He makes a big deal that their names are written in heaven – and yet other scriptures show pretty clearly that many, if not all of mankind is written in a book of life!

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Did you notice that I said A book? Because this is the cool part. There is not just ONE book of life – the scriptures will not harmonize with only one. There are, actually, not two. There are more than that!

Thus far, we have established that the Book of life contains the blueprints for your body which was designed before you were born. And that everyone is written into THAT book before they are born, and when they die, they are blotted out of the book of “life”. Simple enough.

1 Corinthians 15:39-49 *All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. ... So also is the resurrection of the dead. ... It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. **There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.***

This doesn't say there are two books of life. But it does say there are many different kinds of flesh. And notice the divisions – it doesn't break it down into species, or families, but into **kingdoms**. The fish, bird, animal and man kingdoms are mentioned, and in the next verse the spirit kingdom. And it does specifically stress the difference between the spiritual and physical bodies. Now Christ said...

John 14:2-4 *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. **I go to prepare a place for you.** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

It always bothered me – why did He need to specifically prepare a place for us? Wasn't heaven big enough? Did He have to build new bedrooms into His Father's mansion for us? And why couldn't He have prepared a place for us in the thousands of years leading up to this plan?

We all know that those who inherit eternal life will get a new spirit body. Not made of this crude, fleshy stuff, but luminous beings! But where does this body come from? We know that even our current fleshy tabernacles were designed by God “when as yet there were none of them” ... are we then to assume that God just *poof* makes us a new spirit body? That doesn't make sense!

Philippians 3:21 *Who shall change our vile body, **that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body**, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

Notice that He is going to CHANGE our vile body and FASHION it like His own! This requires work, thought, planning, and overall, DESIGN! But not a physical design, but a spiritual one – not a body of mud, but a body of light! Will He do this without a blueprint?

The physical things are a SHADOW, or an EXAMPLE, or a PATTERN of the spiritual! It stands to reason that if God has a book of life for mankind, out of which he is written when he dies, that He must also have a book for the spiritual! Moreover, referring back to **1 Corinthians 15**, there are different kinds of flesh! Different kinds of LIFE!

If this is true, then there is not one, OR two books of life – but a book of life of birds, of beasts, of fish, of angels, of the Man-Kind, and of the GOD KIND! And that LAST book of life is the one that is truly SPECIAL!

We are all born into one book of life; this book that God maintains, and updates keeps track of how “our members” are assembled, how many hairs are on our head, and even an approximation of how old you will live to be is written in there (**Job 14:5**)! This “roster of the living” is constantly maintained and updated as new information flows into the library of God.

And there is one of these entries in one of these books of life for everything “in which is the breath of life”, a way of keeping track of that divine spark which He gave to all creatures! And in his “Book of Life of Birds” every single one of the tens of Billions of sparrows in the world are written! And when one dies, God takes white-out and scratches its NAME

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off the list!

Isaiah 40:26 *Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath **created these things**, that bringeth out their host by number: **he calleth them ALL BY NAMES by the greatness of his might**, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.*

But this is “for the birds”! For man has a greater, more awesome destiny than all the creatures – His spirit has a future! When we are offered the spirit of God, we are, in analogy to human birth, begotten of God.

1 John 5:18 *We know that whosoever is **BORN of God sinneth not; but he that is BEGOTTEN of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.***

God has, by giving us the earnest of the spirit, offered us an adoption. A chance to be BORN again. Not born again out of our earthly mother's womb, to be written again in the physical Book of Life – the Book of Life of the Man kind – but a chance to be born again into the family of GOD! To be an actual MEMBER of the GOD KIND! To change SPECIES, as it were, from “carnal” to “spiritual”!

But for now, we are not yet a member of that family! We are only unborn fetuses in the womb of the world, not to be born again until the return of Jesus Christ and the resurrection! But just as the unborn fetus of the Man-Kind is written in God's Book Of Life for Men, SO ALSO are the unborn fetuses of the GOD KIND written in HIS book!

1 Corinthians 15:35-38 *But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, **thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.***

The body that is sowed in your grave is NOT the body that you will receive when you are BORN into the family of God!

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 *So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: **It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.***

It is SOWN a body of mud, corruptible and contemptible but it is RAISED a LITERAL CHILD OF GOD, a new being of the GOD KIND, with a SPIRITUAL BODY! And it is that same spiritual body that Jesus said He went to “prepare” for us!

John 14:2-3 *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. **And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.***

Flesh and blood CANNOT inherit the kingdom of God! As a man, you would not be able to look upon the being you will be as a member of the God Kind! And Jesus went to prepare this spiritual body for us, to prepare the blueprints so that we may be changed “in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye”, so that where HE lives, we may live also!

And of all these books of life, it is only man who is offered a place in God's Kingdom – to be adopted into the literal SPECIES of God – and so it is only man whose spirit God preserves:

Ecclesiastes 3:21 *Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, **and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?***

Ecclesiastes 12:7 *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: **and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.***

God has no more use for the spirit of a beast when it dies! Not so with the spirit in a man, for whom He intends to do everything He can to bring him into the family of God! And it is only those who are not written in this “Book of Life of the God Kind” who will be worshipping the beast!

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Revelation 13:8 *And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the **book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.***

This isn't the physical book of life, out of which God threatened to blot Israel, but the SPIRITUAL BOOK OF LIFE OF THE LAMB! The book which contains the blueprints for your spiritual body, BUT ONLY IF YOU OVERCOME! Otherwise, God can simply blot you out of that book before you are “born”, and you will be written only in the book of life of Man. When you die and are blotted out of that, God will resurrect you to a resurrection of judgment, and offer you a lesser challenge and though the reward will be smaller, it will STILL involve adoption into the family of God, and into the God Kind!

But if after your life in the second resurrection you still have not overcome and obeyed God with all your heart, mind and soul, and God STILL does not find your name written in the Book Of Life Of The Lamb, He will rip the page out of the Book Of Life Of Man and toss it – and you – into the lake of Fire.

Then like the lowly sparrow, your spirit, too, will return to the Earth.

Could not be held by death – because he had never sinned and never fallen short of the glory of God. Wages of sin is death, if you never sinned, you would never be written out of the book of life.

Moses' entry worth more than all of Israel's

Christ – Psalms 139 – in the lowest parts of the earth

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Letters

Letter from Name Withheld (August 13, 2022)

(Parts of this letter that could identify the author have been deleted.)

Person writes:

I clearly understand Mr. Steven Blackledge's consternation about the way his work was handled.

Laura writes:

Using intimidation on people is not an act of fear, it is an act to make people fear the person that is using intimidation to get their way. Intimidation is used in bullying and in domestic abuse. It is an abuse to use intimidation on anyone.

Steven Blackledge's article was not handled any different than anyone else's article is handled. There is no sugar-coated way to tell someone that what they are teaching is not in scripture.

Person writes:

The section “Iron sharpens Iron” allows for negative critiquing, which seems to be mostly the case.

Darwin & Laura write:

Not all “Iron Sharpens Iron” or “Editors Notes” are negative. We agree that many of them are of a negative nature due to the fact that the persons article is being critiqued and is pointed out to be in error. That person won't see it as something positive. However, all correction proves to be a positive result. **Heb 12:11** “**At the time all punishment seems to be pain and not joy: but after, those who have been trained by it get from it the peace-giving fruit of righteousness.**” (BBE) However, others have put positive comments in “Iron Sharpens Iron” and us in “Editors Notes” at times.

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Person writes:

Yes, everyone has a right to an opinion and to express their opinion. However, to express one's opinion in a public forum which maybe without merit and cannot be replied to, is in my opinion counterproductive.

Darwin & Laura write:

On this one we disagree with you. We have seen publications within the Church of God that let anything be published and seldom ever put notes of any kind on any of it. When this happens it creates a great deal of confusion especially for new people and for those who do not do any or very little research.

When anyone writes an article or gives a sermon, they are teaching other people. Not all people who write articles or give sermons are of God, which is more than likely why some people go off and create their own doctrines. Instead of doing the research that is needed, some people just read other people's articles, watch their videos, or listen to their sermons and either follow what they have just learned or use what they have just learned to formulate their own doctrines. But what if what they learned comes from a person who is not of God? It is hard to know who those people are.

I do not know where this individual has gotten the idea that people cannot reply to an “Editor's Note”, an “Iron Sharpening Iron” or an article. Anyone who reads our newsletter can reply to anything in it. That is the way it has always been.

Person writes:

My thought is that, if you determine a study or an article is worth publishing, publish it, but leave the critique to each reader to do in private. This way you remain neutral and do not risk offending writer or reader.

Laura writes:

So, in other words, everyone should just shut up and share nothing with other brethren.

Most of the people reading our newsletter are probably alone most of the time. This newsletter allows them to share what they learn with others or not share with others, whatever they choose. Most of all it allows them to see how not just us but how others view certain scriptures. Sharing or give and take in a group of brethren is one of the best ways I know of for people to learn what scripture says and at the same time to have others, not just us, guide them in a right direction so they are less likely to make up weird unbiblical doctrines.

The shepherds were supposed to feed the sheep, but instead they continue to scatter the sheep. Sheep who are left alone generally end up going off track at one point or the other because they have no one to bounce their ideas off of. It is really easy for Satan to pick off the sheep one at a time because they are all alone. It is harder to get at them when they are in a group and know what scripture says.

Granted by participating in a public work you are running the risk of getting hurt at one time or the other but better to be hurt than to miss the first fruit resurrection because you did your own thing instead of doing what scripture says to do.

The Great Tribulation is going to hurt many people including those in the Church of God. Many of God's people have been killed for the Word of God. Why are you the exception that should never be hurt by any of it?

As Steven, the one in the Bible found out, when he told people of their sin, they stoned him to death. Telling someone their doctrine does not square with scripture is something that cannot be sugar coated. People invest time and work into making up fictional doctrines and once they do that, they don't want to give them up. So, when someone challenges it, they get mad at the messenger instead of looking closer at the scriptures they are using to construct these false doctrines.

People who get angry when challenged are not willing to learn from others and won't even look. People who are secure with a challenge will check a new idea every time one comes up because they want to get it right. It is called “Growing in Grace and Knowledge.” You have to be open to learning from scripture, which should be your first choice in learning.

Holy Days 2022

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Passover – April 16, 2022 (Observed at Sunset the Evening Before)
Unleavened Bread – April 16-22, 2022
Pentecost – June 5, 2022
Trumpets - September 26, 2022
Atonement – October 5, 2022
Tabernacles – October 10-16, 2022
Last Great Day – October 17, 2022