

And The Books Were Opened

Revelation 20:12

Introduction: *“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened.”* What John sees is reminiscent of Dan. 7:10 where Daniel saw the future judgment: *“A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.”* We have 2 passages informing us that when the judgment occurs, books will be opened. What are these books? What is written in these books? They must be important! It is evident from the passage that books are central in our relationship to God. God uses books to accomplish His purposes. What books should we know about? This message was a sermon of Alexander Campbell’s, recorded in Coffman’s commentary.

1. **The Book of Nature.** God has left a record of his power, brilliance through creation itself (Psalm 19:1-3, *“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.”*; Rom. 1:20, *“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse”*; Acts 14:17, *“Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”* Angels worship God by saying that the whole earth is filled with the glory of God (Isa. 6:3). Although nature points us to God, the book of nature does not reveal His redemptive plan. It can tell of His existence, supernatural nature, knowledge, & power, but it cannot tell of God’s desire to forgive or of His love through Jesus Christ.
2. **The Book of Remembrance.** God will remember *“those who feared the Lord and esteemed His name.”* Malachi 3:16, *“Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.”* God also remembers those who disobey, unwilling to listen to Him. Isa 30:8,9 *“Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord.”* God will call forth even the things that dwell in our hearts. (1 Cor. 4:5 *“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”* Lk. 8:17 *“For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.”* Rom. 2:16 *“In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”* However, there are some things that God will not remember. Jer. 31:31-35 *“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts is his name.”*
3. **The Old Testament.** The Old Testament continues to be the most impressive witness of the deity and Godhead of Christ. It establishes his credentials historically for ages prior to the Incarnation. It showed God had a plan, and that Christ is the central part of His plan. Jn. 5:39 *“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”* Lk. 24:44-45 *“And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.”* It will stand as a witness to righteousness, faith, and God’s redemptive plan.
4. **The New Testament.** This book will most certainly be opened on that day, because it contains the message of Jesus. Jesus plainly stated that His words matter enormously. Matt. 7:24 *“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock... 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.”* 28:18-20 *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of*

the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world.” They are the basis of judgment (Jn. 12:48; *“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”*). We know this also is an eternally relevant book. (Jn. 10:35 *“...the Scripture cannot be broken.”* 1 Peter 1:25 *“But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”* Matt. 24:35 *“Heaven & earth shall pass away but my words shall never pass away.”* Jn. 6:68 *“Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”*)

5. **The Record of Every Man’s Works.** All people, both “great and small” shall be judged according to their works. Modern culture is very uncomfortable with this kind of preaching but it must be done. This is taught by a number of New Testament authorities: Jesus in John 5:28-29 *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29. And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”* Paul (Romans 2:4-11 *“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; 10 But glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: 11 For there is no respect of persons with God.”* 2 Corinthians 5:10 *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”* Peter in Acts 10:35 *“But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”* James (James 2:14, *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 24, Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. 26, For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*); John (1 John 2:4-5; *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. 3:7-8 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. 8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*); Revelation (Revelation 3:15; *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 14:13; And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them. 20:12b-13 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. 13 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.*).
6. **The Book of Life.** This is the pivotal book at judgment concerning our eternal destiny (Rev. 3:5 *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. 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.; 20:12, 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.; 21:27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.*). Paul reminds those at Philippi that they are in that book already (Phil. 4:3 *And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow laborers, whose names are in the book of life.*). Lk. 10:20 *Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*

Conclusion: Some of these books are changeless; others can be changed by you. What do these books say about you?