

- Refer to *Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 20:11-15 and 21:27*, as well as possibly to *Philippians 4:3*

Wedding Guest Lists!

- Weddings are wonderful!
 - generally days of great joy, of great celebration, marking the depth of love a couple have one for the other, and all the gladness their family and friends have in seeing them happy!
 - we excited and want to make weddings special...
 - we'll get all specially dressed up...
 - we'll hire fancy cars, organise photographers and video cameras to record the celebrations
 - we'll lay on a special meal
 - and for many people one of the most important things about the day, beyond the vows that are exchanged, is that they want to share it with those who know and who love them, who have been significant in their lives as they have come to this point - parents, siblings, other family, friends...

And that brings us to the guest list!!

- if you have ever had to have a part in organising a wedding, this is one of the things that can cause the most stress!!
- I was talking to a young woman in a previous congregation who was getting married the following summer
- she was enjoying all the preparations, and she had got a couple of days off work that week. She was hoping to get some more done....
- but she was not looking forward to the time when she and her fiance would have to sit down and sort out the guest list!
- all the competing demands, of money, of practicality, and of the variety of relationships we have can make it a tricky task!!
- At the end of the day she will end up with a list of names of those who have responded to the invitation to come:
 - hopefully all people who she and her fiance want to share in the joy and celebration as they make their public commitment to each other
 - and if on the day someone not on the guest list "crashed" the wedding, we'd wonder at their cheek!
 - because they don't have the level of existing relationship with the couple getting married

The Book of Life

- Our title for today is "The Book of Life"
 - prompted by what we read last week from Daniel 12:1 - "But at that time your people - everyone whose name is found written in the book - will be delivered."
 - simply an image several of the Biblical writers used to describe the distinction there is between those who have responded to God's offer of life in Jesus, and those who have not
 - most often used by John in the book of Revelation, but also by Paul in *Philippians 4:3* and also by the Psalmist in Ps.69
 - the imagery, if not the exact words, are also used elsewhere
 - for example, Deuteronomy 29:20: "All the curses written in this book will fall upon him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven."
- Let's read Revelation 20:11-15:
- (11) *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. (12) And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. (13) The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each*

person was judged according to what he had done. (14) Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. (15) If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

- What is happening here?
 - at the end of time, God will bring everyone who has ever lived before his throne to give account for the life they have been given
 - the image is of a court room, with the books containing a record of the evidence
 - and judgement is made according to the record of what that person has done...
- *Great ledgers from D J Clark days...*
- But wait, that's not all!
 - for as well as "the books", the records of behaviour there is another book...
 - "the book of life!"
 - distinct from the record of behaviour in the books
 - judgement may have been made on the basis of the contents of those records of behaviour - and we know that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" as Paul puts it in Romans - so all deserve punishment!
 - but our destiny is not decided on the basis of the contents of those books
 - rather God looks in the book of life

How do we get our name in the book of life?

- Which simply begs the question about how our names appear in the book of life!
 - and the answer lies in the person and nature of the one whose book it is
 - *"Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."* (Rev 21:27)
 - this verse is speaking of heaven, and notes again that those who gain entry are those whose names appear in the book of life
 - but note *who's* book this is: the Lamb's
 - in other words, Jesus' book of life
 - its his list of those who have accepted the invitation to the wedding
 - its his list of those who have become his friends, who know him and love him
 - its his list of those who he will welcome to his side, not because they are good but because they welcomed him into their lives
- *Its a guest list, not a wages sheet!*

Conclusion

- Finally, I want to pick up a verse earlier in Revelation:
 - *"I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels."* (Rev 3:5)
 - we've seen that the fact that our names appear in the book of life is nothing to do with our goodness - indeed, its despite our sin!
 - but here is a final reassurance: *Jesus will never blot our names out from his book!*
 - we'll never lose our relationship with him
- I confess that I've lost touch with a number of the friends who were at our wedding
 - circumstances change, we've moved, they've moved
 - but Jesus will never move on from relationship with us, he will never blot out our names from his book of life!
 - *what a cause for rejoicing and praise!!*