

God's Library

The Bible mentions four kinds of books in God's library. When we recognize the overall pattern of these books, we can understand better the individual references that we encounter in specific passages.

Two kinds of books record established facts, while two contain God's decrees of what will happen. Viewed from another perspective, two look at the actions of men and the resulting history of the world, while two concentrate on men's state as living or dead. We can arrange them 2x2 as in this table:

	Accomplished Facts	Decreed Purposes
Men's Actions	1. Record Book	2. Book of Decrees
Men's States	3. Book of the Living	4. Book of Life

Of these four kinds of book, 1 and 2 are found in both the OT and the NT. 3 is distinctively OT, while 4 is most common in the NT (though there may be a few OT references).

1 The Record Book

This book is patterned on the chronicles kept by earthly kings. We have examples of this kind of human record book in Esther 6:1, and in the books of Chronicles in the OT.

God's record book is a record of the deeds of men and nations.

- “The books” are specified in general in Dan 7:10 and in the closely related Rev. 20:12 (along with 4, the book of life).
- Specific books record, on the one hand, good deeds, and on the other hand, evil ones.
 - The good are recorded in books mentioned in Neh 13:14 and Mal 3:16-18.
 - The evil deeds are recorded in books mentioned in Ps 51:1 and (apparently of the entire nation) Isa 65:6. Note the possibility of blotting out mentioned in Ps 51:1.

2 The Book of Decrees

These decrees first of all concern the lives of individual people. Thus:

- God's omniscience extends to the days of life before it is lived, Psa 139:16 (Hebrew)
- This knowledge is a consolation to the Psalmist in oppression, Ps 56:8
- Our Lord came in fulfillment of such purpose, Ps 40:7, cf. Heb 10:7
- Jer 22:30 decrees the childlessness of Jeconiah through such a book.

Since God controls the lives of individuals, he may decree the course of empires through them.

- Dan 10:21 traces the course of the pre-Christian era according to the “writing of truth.”
- Decreed curses for sin are often mentioned, Zech 5:1ff, perhaps following the custom of

recording the penalties for violations of a covenant. See Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, on Suzerainty treaties (cited in TDNT I p. 619). Thus also in Rev 5:1, the future history of the world is traced in a book.

- The role of a prophet in prophesying is sometimes stimulated by eating such a book, Ezek 2:9-3:3; Rev 10:8-11.
- The Revelation itself is such a book, 1:11.

There does not seem to be a clear distinction between books that prophesy facts and books that decree them. God can successfully prophesy only because he completely decrees whatever comes to pass.

3 Book of the Living

This book, like the record book (1), has a secular human parallel. Neh 7:5, 64 refer to census records of the legitimate population of an area.

In the divine realm, this book records those who are alive at a given time, or in an eschatological sense, those who will pass the judgment of Israel at the end of Daniel's seventieth week and enter the Millennium.

- Those alive at a given time are in view in Exod 32:32-34 (cf. v. 10 and Deut 9:14); Ps 69:28. This may also be the meaning of the "bundle of life" in 1 Sam 25:29.
- Census books record those who will be admitted to the Millennium in Dan 12:1; Ps 87:5; Isa 4:3; and Ezek 13:9.

4 Book of Life

This book, mentioned only in the NT, designates those whom God has chosen to salvation in Lk 10:20; Phil 4:3; Heb 12:23; Rev 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12, 20:15, 21:27. The reference in 22:19 is from the Vulgate and is not supported by the vast majority of Greek manuscripts.

Dan 12:1 and Isa 4:3 may belong here rather than in 3.