

Escrow Blessings: Every believer of the Church Age has already inherited escrow blessings. They are revealed in Ephesians 1:3–4 and 1 Peter 1:3–5:

Ephesians 1:3 Worthy of praise is God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who [as First Party or Grantor] has blessed [aorist active participle of the verb: εὐλογέω (*eulogéo*): creation of the escrow] us [believers, the Second Party or Grantees] with every spiritual blessing [the contents of the escrow] in heavenly places [the Depository] in Christ [the Third Party, Escrow Officer, or Depository],

v. 4 since He Himself has elected [main verb: ἐκλέγω (*eklégō*)] us in Him before the beginning of the world [eternity past & prior to Genesis 1:1] that we should be holy and blameless in His presence. (EXT)

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again through a constantly living confidence in the resurrection of Jesus Christ out from the dead,

v. 4 that is, Who has secured for us an inheritance which is nonperishable and undefiled and will not fade away [escrow blessings imputed in eternity past], reserved in heaven for you [on deposit in the Depository],

v. 5 who are garrisoned on earth by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (EXT)

The distribution of these escrow blessings will occur in heaven at the evaluation tribunal of Christ mentioned in:



2 Corinthians 5:10 We must all appear before the evaluation tribunal of Christ for the purpose that each one may receive back the things done through his body, whether good [ἀγαθός (*agathós*): of intrinsic value] or bad [φαύλος (*phaúlos*): evil, wicked, corrupt, depraved]. (EXT)

There are seven passages in Revelation 2 and 3 that reveal the distribution of escrow blessings at the evaluation tribunal of Christ.

The inventory is cited by John in prophecies made to the seven churches of Asia Minor. The order in which they appear in context are Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

John describes those who receive escrow awards by one of two Greek phrases in his comments on each of the seven churches:

1. **Ephesus:**

Revelation 2:7 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes [“is a winner”: τῷ νικῶντι (*tō nikōnti*)], I will grant to eat from the tree of life [NA #1] which is in the Paradise of God.”

NOTE: The root verb is **νικάω (*nikáō*)**: “to be victorious, to prevail, overcome, conquer, subdue.” The noun form is **νίκη (*nikē*)**: “victory.” He who “overcomes” through spiritual growth in the Invisible War is victorious and therefore a “winner” by means of doctrine in the soul.

The insert “[NA]” followed by the symbol [#] and an integer refer to specific Nike Awards, a term used to describe the grants mentioned in chapters 2 and 3. These awards are referred to as “every spiritual blessing” in all major English translations of:

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, (NASB)



2. Smyrna:

Revelation 2:11 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who overcomes [ὁ νικῶν (*ha nikōn*): the winner] will never be hurt by the second death [great white throne judgment].”

The Nike Award for believers at Smyrna is revealed in the previous verse. Here is the expanded translation of:

Revelation 2:10 “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, in order that you may be tested, and you will have special persecution ten times.¹ Keep on becoming faithful until death, and I will give you a crown of life.” [NA #2] (EXT)

In A.D. 313, Constantine, Roman emperor in the West, and Licinius, Roman Emperor in the East, issued the Edict of Milan which terminated these ten persecutions noted by John in Revelation 2:10.

Edict of Milan, a proclamation that permanently established religious toleration for Christianity within the Roman Empire. It was the outcome of a political agreement concluded in Milan between the Roman emperors Constantine I and Licinius² in February 313. The proclamation, made for the East by Licinius in June 313, granted all persons freedom to worship whatever deity they pleased, assured Christians of legal rights (including the right to organize churches), and directed the prompt return to Christians of confiscated property. Previous edicts of toleration had been as short-lived as the regimes that sanctioned them, but this time the edict effectively established religious toleration.³

¹ These persecutions were imposed by 10 Roman emperors beginning with Domitian in A.D. 81 and lasting through Diocletian's reign in 305. He was succeeded by Galerius who reluctantly issued an edict of toleration that canceled all persecution of believers and pardoned all Christians still living.

² “Constantine I, emperor of the Western Roman Empire and Licinius, emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, issued the Edict of Milan extending rights and toleration to Christians” (*Merriam-Webster's Biographical Dictionary* [Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Publishers, 1995], s.vv. “Constantine I,” “Licinius”).

³ “Milan, Edict of” in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia*, 15th ed., (2010), 8:123.



Principles:

1. The church is never ready to evangelize and send out missionaries until the church is toughened by testing.
2. Testing toughens and prosperity softens. To pass both tests the church had three centuries of persecution before prosperity in the fourth century.
3. Persecutions in a client nation are historical trends until the exit resurrection of the church.
4. The precedent for persecution of the church is found in Revelation 2:10, “the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, in order that you may be tested, and you will have special persecution ten times.”
5. The church must be separated from the state. Human government is to be honored by the church, but the government is populated by fallen men and women.
6. Consequently, during historical downtrends, the church and believers are persecuted by the state. The suffering of believers is the result of suffering for blessing for those who function inside the divine power system and suffering for punishment for those who function in the cosmic systems.

3. Pergamum

Revelation 2:17 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit communicates to the churches. To him who overcomes [τῷ νικῶντι (*tō nikōnti*): “to the winner”], to him I will give from the hidden manna [NA #3], and I will give him a white stone, and a new name of aristocracy written on the stone [NA #4] which no one knows but he who receives it.” (EXT)

The issuing of a new name is illustrated by the Roman system of adoption. Every adult son was given new names, usually three or trinomial.

The first name was the family name or praenomen, given at birth, the second the nomen, the name of the original Roman family or clan. The third was the cognomen or nickname .



The praenomen or given name could be Gaius, the nomen or original family, Julius, and the cognomen Caesar.

The new name in verse 17 is issued by the Lord to winner believers of the Church Age as a new name of aristocracy.

This new name is assigned to the “white stone” or resurrection body which is free of the sin nature and the recipient of this new name.

4. Thyatira:

Revelation 2:26 He who overcomes [ὁ νικῶν (*ha nikōn*): the winner], and he who keeps My assignments until the end [physical death or the Rapture], to him I will give authority over the nations [NA #5];

Church-Age winners will be free of the sin nature in their resurrection bodies. They are trusted by the Lord to have authority over the nations that will exist in the Millennium. Because of their perfection, their authority will be legitimate and fair.

Revelation 2:28 and I will grant him the Royal Order of the Morning Star [NA #6: investiture into the royal order of the Morning Star].

This is the first of two insignia of office, here the Most Noble Order of the Morning Star. Later in the sixth paragraph, the winner will receive the grant of a coat of arms.

The Morning Star has two meanings. Jesus Christ is referred to as the Morning Star in:

Revelation 22:16 “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

5. That Jesus assigns this title to Himself while “giving winners the morning star” in Revelation 2:28 indicates it is an additional Nike Award. We characterize it as membership in the Royal Order of the Morning Star.
6. In astronomy, Venus is regarded as the morning star. It precedes the rising of the sun and is the brightest planet when observed from the earth.
7. Jesus is the Morning Star who appears when the horrors of the Tribulation have inflicted global terror on earth’s population. His sudden arrival brings deliverance as well as justice.
8. In addition, His prophecy of the eternal state following the Millennium and the destruction of the universe, alerts us of His rulership forever and ever in the new heavens and the new earth.

The morning star is Christ Himself in 22:16. For the overcoming believer. Christ’s presence is the light in the dark and difficult times before the dawn of the Son’s coming. Moreover, *morning star* refers to the faithful believer’s share in the glory or splendor of Christ. Christ gives every faithful believer the privilege of being like Him in royal splendor, to various degrees.⁴

5. Sardis:

1. There are three Nike Awards in the following verse:

Revelation 3:5 “Thus the winner [ὁ νικῶν (*ha nikōn*)] will be clothed [predictive future middle indicative of περιβάλλω (*peribállō*): at the Evaluation Tribunal of Christ⁵] in white garments [Uniform of Glory (NA #7)] and I will never blot his name out of the book of life [NA #8: See Luke 10:20b & Revelation 20:15], in fact I will acknowledge his order of chivalry in the presence of My Father and before His angels [NA #9: presentation at court to the Father]. (EXT)

⁴ Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Commentary, gen. ed. Earl D. Radmacher (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 1739.

⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:10.



2. The first Nike awarded at Sardis is the presentation of a Uniform of Glory, described a “white garments,” emblematic of the advanced believers of the Church Age.
3. His name is eternally recorded in the Book of Life under his new title of peerage.
4. This winner-believer will also be presented at court before the Father by Jesus Christ.
6. **Philadelphia:**

Revelation 3:12 He who overcomes [ὁ νικῶν (*ha nikōn*): the winner], I will make him a pillar or stela [**NA #10: στύλος** (*stúlos*): a free-standing column containing exploits in the Invisible War] in the temple of My God, he will never vanish from history. Also, on him I will grant a coat of arms; [**NA #11**]: (a) on a blue sinister field I will charge a crown and emblazon in script, “Elohim,” the title of My God, (b) the middle field is gold and charged with the image of the Tree of Life, symbolic of the new Jerusalem [**NA #12**], the name of the city of My God, which comes down from heaven from My God, and (c) the dexter field is charged with My new name: “King of kings and Lord of Lords,” emblazoned in script under the charge of a golden lion rampant.⁶ (EXT)

1. A stela, monolith, obelisk, or column records the exploits of the believer’s successful engagements in the Invisible War.
2. The twelfth Nike Award is a royal coat of arms. The shield is divined into three sections and described from the standpoint of the person holding it.
3. Therefore, for the observer’s left is the dexter, or the right side of the holder. To the observers’ right is the sinister, or the left side of the holder. The center of the shield is the middle.

⁶ “Rampant: Heraldry. Standing and reared up, with head to the dexter side and one (usually dexter) foreleg raised above the other” (*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, 2d ed. (1953), s.v. “rampant.”)