

“THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION”

THE PHILADELPHIA FACTOR

John fell at Christ’s feet, unable to move, when he heard, then saw, the glorified Christ as priest, king and judge (Revelation 1:17). In the next two chapters, Christ gives additional fascinating self-declarations of who He wants to be perceived as, which is unique to each church. Collectively, He is actively instructing the church as to how he will be seen in the rest of the book! He:

1. Is seen in **a pastoral role**, walking among those churches and holding/protecting the seven stars or leaders of each group in His right hand. (Ephesus)
2. Is the first and the last (**the One spanning redemptive history**), who was dead and rose to life. This living Savior provides hope for the persecuted, even those facing martyrdom. Death is not the end. He is the Savior of this history! (Smyrna)
3. Has a sword (revealed as coming out of His mouth in chapter one) that suggests He **is the revealer and source of truth and executes judgment honorably** (expressed later in 19:15) (Pergamos)
4. Has eyes and feet, which reveal that **nothing escapes His notice** and He **will bring whatever trials necessary to cleanse and purify** His people. (Thyatira)
5. Is represented by the **full expression of the Spirit** (the seven Spirits of God) to all those who claim Him as a Savior. (Sardis)

Early on, the student of Revelation is, therefore, *moved into an amazing Christological view* that is high and elevated. Everything collectively, in turn, is how Jesus wants to be seen as John’s apocalyptic narrative is progressively studied.

The Philadelphia Church

Another special picture comes to view as Jesus describes Himself in the beginning of the narrative of the Philadelphia church:

“To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open” (Revelation 3:7 – NIV).

To the leader or “*star*” of this church, Christ is identified as:

- “*Holy and true*”
- Having the “*key of David*”

“**Holy and true**” – Christ is called the Holy One of God (Mark 1:24, Luke 4:34). There, His deity is introduced.¹ In Revelation 6:10, He is addressed as “*sovereign Lord*” (NIV). The word

¹ Beale, Gregory K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan – 1999), p. 283.

here for “true” is *alethinós*, meaning genuine, faithful to His promise.² **Together:** “I’m a divine being who keeps His promises!” He is actually about to give this people a profound promise!

“Key of David”: David’s kingdom became a symbol of Christ’s kingdom (Ezekiel 21:27, Isaiah 16:5). **The key** to that kingdom was represented at the time of Hezekiah as one of **authority**. That key to the “house of David” was taken from Shebna (representing Satan) and given to Eliakim (symbolic of Christ) (Isaiah 22:21-22). Eliakim then had the key to the “kingdom.”

- Christ, here, states that He has assumed authority over David’s (God’s) kingdom, having that “key.”
- Jesus is also the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, root of David, the offspring of David who came from his tribe (Revelation 5:5, 22; Luke 1:32).
- He now has **the key** to the **kingdom door**. He controls who enters. No one can change His decisions.

God’s authority is sacred and irrevocable. His control of that door and its access is His divine judicial prerogative! Beautiful and awesome is what He now says to that church:

“I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name” (Revelation 3:8).

Through His judicial eyes (1:14b) He announces, “I know all about you.” Amazing – one would think that Christ would follow this up with penetrating details! But rather comes this statement of wondering awe.

- ***“I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.” That’s the promise!***
- The door to His kingdom has been opened to the people of Philadelphia! Something holy and sanctifying must be going on with this group!

Part of what God appreciates comes from His “in spite of” statement: In spite of **weakness**, they:

- Continued to obey His Word
- Didn’t deny His name
- Were patient (vs 10)

Of the four characteristics, “*little strength*” (weakness) seems to stand out as a negative. This, however, turns out to be an uplifting quality!

- They may be weak – but the information from Paul echoes and reverberates when we observe this church:

² Stefanovic, Ranko; *Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs, MI; 2002), p. 139.

“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty” (I Corinthians 1:27; cf. II Corinthians 12:9).

- Stunning! Though weak, their witness was strong.³ Their missionary zeal later literally influenced the Christian church to expand beyond the European frontier, even to Africa and, later yet, to the Americas!⁴

This group is unique among the seven churches! It will later be shown that they have characteristics similar to the 144,000 in the 14:1-5 discourse!

“Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee” (Revelation 3:9).

Within the Philadelphia community were a group of dishonest Jews from which Christ disassociated Himself. This was so disconcerting that He called them the “synagogue of Satan” (as He did a group in Smyrna – 2:9).

- They were ethnic Jews who claimed to be the true Israel. But Christ’s words are pointed – ***they aren’t His.***
- They denied that Jesus was the Messiah and persecuted those who believed that He was.⁵

This reflects the ever-widening gap between Judaism and Christianity. The latter anticipates that ***“every knee will bow”*** (Philippians 2:10-11; cf. Isaiah 60:14) in humiliation, acknowledging Christ as the Messiah!⁶ These Jews represent those who were exclusive and vehemently oppose Him as Savior.

To that ancient apostolic church – and to the end-time persecuted church – comes the assurance:

“I know who is hurting you; I know the ones who are really in apostasy and bringing in discord.”

- In Nebuchadnezzar’s day the three worthies were to ***bow down*** to that great golden image (Daniel 3:6, 11).
- In the wilderness Satan offered rewards to Jesus if He would ***bow down*** and worship him (Luke 4:7).
- Here, the Jews wanted the Christians to ***bow down*** to their traditions. However, Jesus said that ***they will bow at the feet of those saints at the end.*** This has profound future implications. At the end there will be those claiming to be His who try to force a

³ Naden, Roy C.; *The Lamb Among the Beasts* (Review and Herald Publishing Association; Hagerstown, MD; 1996), p. 85.

⁴ Doukhan, Jacques B.; *Secrets of Revelation* (The Review and Herald Publishing Association; Hagerstown, MD 21740; 2002), p. 41.

⁵ Johnson, Alan F.; *Revelation*, p. 514, from Gaebelin, Frank E. (gen. ed.); *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. II (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 49530; 1981), p. 453.

⁶ Stefanovic, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

non-Biblical “tradition” on God’s people. Finally those apostates will see that they were wrong and bow to truth – but too late.

Christ promises in this mini-prophecy that the saints will be at last acknowledged and vindicated – even by their oppressors! In turn, God’s character will be vindicated!

“The Philadelphia Factor” is now addressed!

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Revelation 3:10).

This ***is a protection promise*** that will come to pass because of their ***patience*** (later associated with the saints (14:12) and echoing those who traverse to and through the 1335 days at the end (Daniel 12:12).

The “hour of temptation” references a very important period of testing, during which Christ protects his people! This is “The Philadelphia Factor”! This ***trial*** or ***testing*** is global, including the wicked, which is implied by the phrase *“them that dwell upon the earth.”*⁷

- It precedes the *“great tribulation”* (Daniel 12:1, Matthew 24:21) (Jacob’s Trouble – Jeremiah 30:7) – and –
- It is referenced elsewhere as will be seen as this study unfolds.

This stressful hour begs Christ’s prayer for the saints: *“I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil”* (John 17:15).

There is a broad and divergent understanding of the meaning of this *“hour of temptation.”* Among scholars there are many explanatory assumptions.

The word for “temptation” is *peirasmos*. It is a period that judges humanity’s final reaction to the ***enticement of sin***.⁸ It is the last “testing time”⁹ to see where everyone’s loyalty lies.¹⁰ The wicked world will even put God to the test during this time.¹¹

- With this fascinating insight, one can conclude that ***this occurs as time is running out***.
- Probation on humanity is about to close. It’s a very end-time issue.
- This is “the” separation experience when the world is divided into two parts forever (the sheep and the goats – Matthew 25:32-33)!

What, then, might this “test” – “temptation” – “enticement” – be? The *“abomination that leads to desolation”* is presented by Christ and Daniel as a defining issue (Matthew 24:15,

⁷ Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

⁸ *Gingrich Lexicon*

⁹ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

¹⁰ *Thayer Lexicon*

¹¹ *Friberg Lexicon* (cf. Hebrews 3:8).

Mark 13:14, Daniel 12:11, 11:31). In turn, that is related to the Mark of the Beast (Revelation 13), where *terminus ad quem* issues are given.

Here we penetrate deeper by appealing to the insights of expositor White. One can grasp a profound meaning in this “Philadelphia factor” when corroborating several thoughts.

Introductory thoughts:

“Just before us is the **‘hour of temptation**, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.’ **All whose faith is not firmly established upon the Word of God will be deceived and overcome.**”¹² Claiming a loyalty to Christ will not be enough. Faith, indelibly fixed on Biblical truth, is then required. This “hour” will be so severe, many will give up the faith.

“The work of this angel (fourth angel – Revelation 8:1-7) comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the Third Angel’s Message (Revelation 14:9-11) **as it swells to a loud cry. And the people of God are thus prepared to stand in the hour of temptation, which they are soon to meet.** I saw a great light resting upon them, and they united to fearlessly proclaim the third angel’s message.”¹³ Those witnessing through the final gospel call will be endowed with special power for the task. It will also prepare them for the “hour of temptation.”

The third angel “proclaimed a fearful warning, **the most terrible threatening ever borne to man. This message was designed to put the children of God upon their guard, and show them the hour of temptation and anguish that was before them [that is alluding to God’s wrath]....** They will be brought into close combat with the beast and his image. Their only hope of eternal life is to remain steadfast. **Although their lives are at stake, yet they must hold fast the truth.**”¹⁴ Approaching this time, God’s people will have life-threatening experiences.

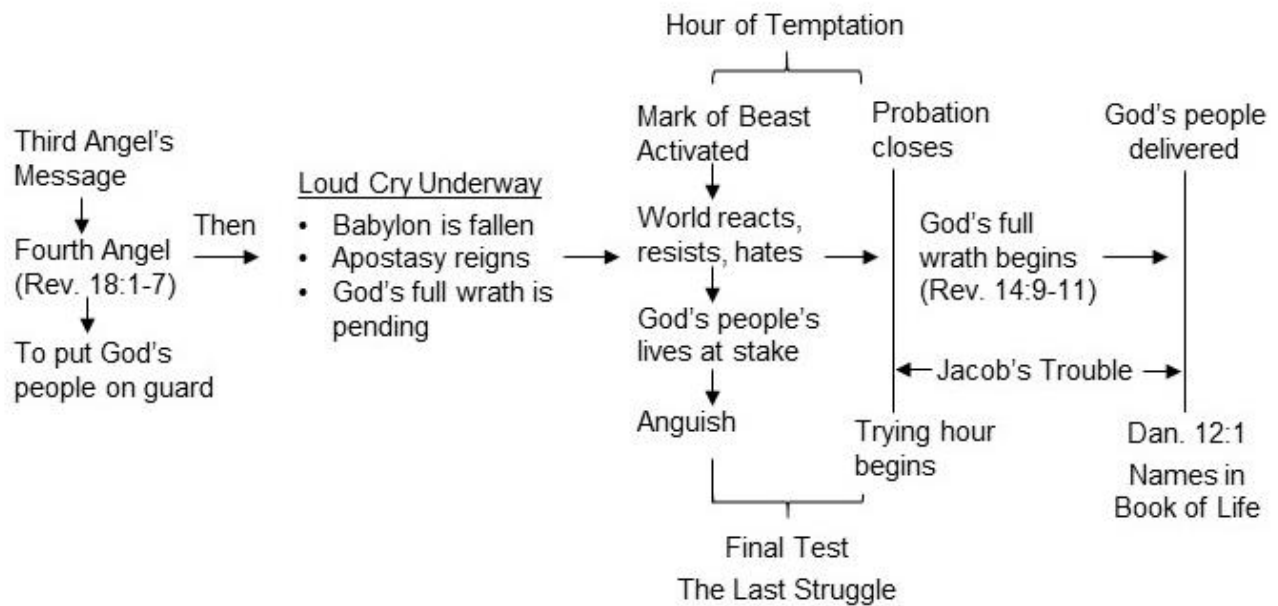
One must study and know about this hour!

1. One could be deceived and overcome.
2. The warning of the Third and Fourth Angel’s Messages must be taken personally.
3. They reveal what the hour of temptation will be like – but aren’t Jacob’s Trouble.
4. The issue relates to the “*mark of the beast*” (Revelation 13:13-17) because it has become a life and death matter.

¹² White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 552, 560 (emphasis added).

¹³ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 277 (emphasis added).

¹⁴ White, Ellen G.; *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 162 (emphasis added).



This imagery looks forward to the time discussed in Revelation 13:7a, 13-17.

- “And he [earth beast] had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed” (Revelation 13:15).

But there’s more:

“The papal power has thought to change the law of God by substituting a spurious Sabbath for that of Jehovah; and all through the religious world the false Sabbath is revered, while the true one is trampled beneath unholy feet. But will the Lord degrade his law to meet the standard of finite man? Will he accept a day possessing no sanctity, in the place of his own Sabbath, which he has hallowed and blessed? No; ***it is on the law of God that the last great struggle of the controversy between Christ and his angels and Satan and his angels will come, and it will be decisive for all the world. This is the hour of temptation to God’s people; but Daniel saw them delivered out of it, every one whose name is written in the Lamb’s book of life.***”¹⁵ (Daniel 12:1).

This “hour of temptation” is in the “final test” for planet earth, shortly before probation closes:

“When the third angel’s message closes, the people of God have accomplished their work. ***They have received ‘the latter rain’ and are prepared for the trying hour (Jacob’s Trouble) before them. The final test has been brought upon the world, and all who have proved loyal to the divine precepts have received ‘the seal of the living God.’*** Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above and with a loud voice says, “It is done.”¹⁶

- Passing this test opens the way for receiving the seal of God!

¹⁵ White, Ellen G.; *The Signs of the Times*, January 17, 1884 (emphasis added).

¹⁶ White, Ellen G.; *The Faith I Live By*, p. 339 (emphasis added).

- The Philadelphia church is assured that they will obtain that Seal!

What happens during this terrible hour?

- The answer is in the fifth Trumpet – the “*first woe.*”
 - During this five-month period Satan has full reign to evangelize evil (just as God’s special witnesses will have full reign to evangelize under the Latter Rain) (Revelation 11:5-6). They will be sealed.
 - This is the “final standoff” between good and evil.
 - This is apparently when the decree will go out to kill all the saints at a predetermined time (just as it happened in Esther’s day)!
- Important to recall that by then the first four Trumpets have begun their destructive work.

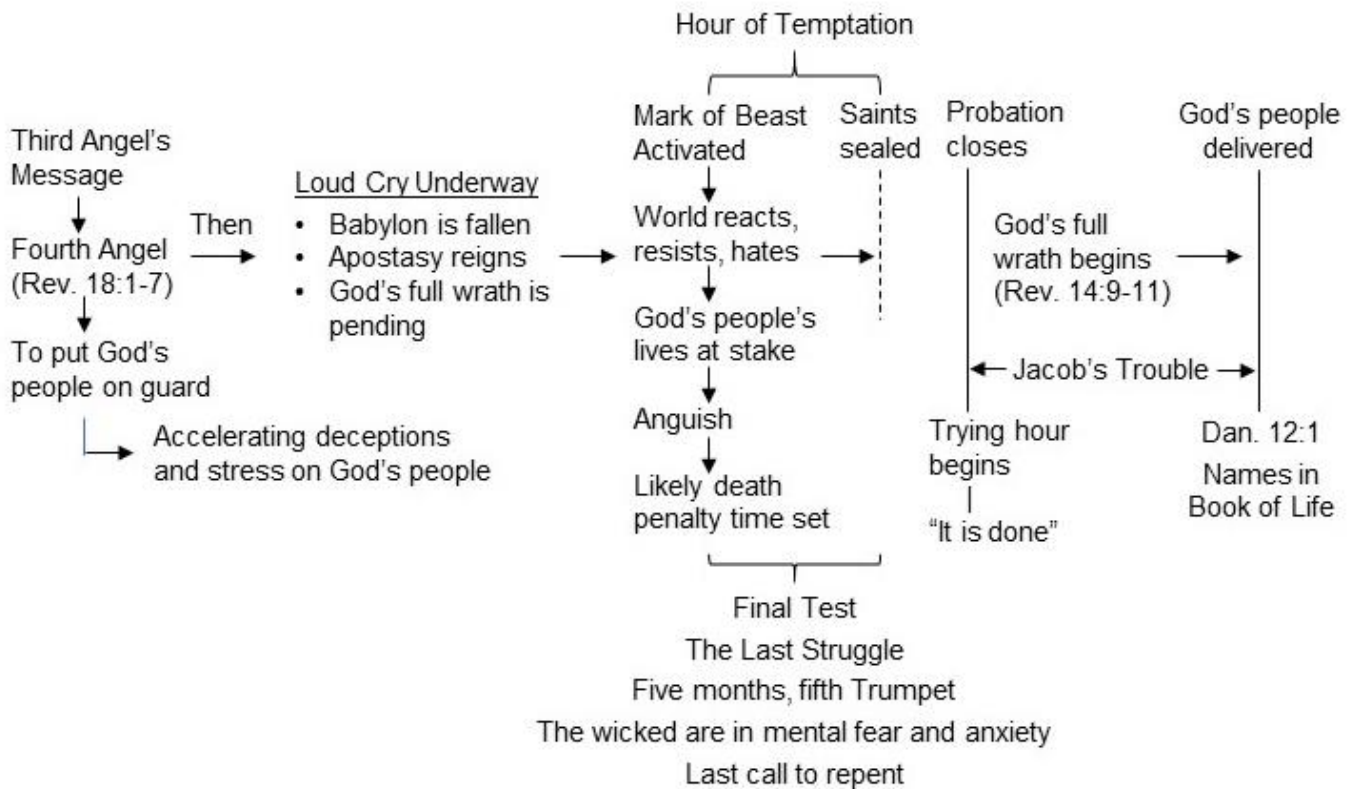
“Probationary time will not continue much longer. Now ***God is withdrawing His restraining hand*** from the earth. Long has He been speaking to men and women through the agency of His Holy Spirit; but they have not heeded the call. Now He is speaking to His people, and to the world, by His judgments. ***The time of these judgments is a time of mercy for those who have not yet had opportunity to learn what is truth.*** Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; His hand is still stretched out to save. Large numbers will be admitted to the fold of safety who in these last days will hear the truth for the first time.”¹⁷

Imagine all of Satan’s angels released from the abyss! Imagine God’s people making earth’s final plea against this opposition!

Riveting all this is another thought from expositor White, addressing this time as one of deception – the hallmark of the fifth Trumpet.

“Just before us is the ‘***hour of temptation***, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.’ [Revelation 3:10.] All whose faith is not firmly established upon the Word of God ***will be deceived and overcome. Satan ‘works with all deceivableness of unrighteousness’ to gain control of the children of men; and his deceptions will continually increase.*** But he can gain his object only as men voluntarily yield to his temptations. Those who are earnestly seeking a knowledge of the truth, and are striving to purify their souls through obedience, thus doing what ***they can to prepare for the conflict***, will find, in the God of truth, a sure defense. ‘Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee,’ [Revelation 3:10.] is the Saviour’s promise. He would sooner send every angel out of Heaven to protect his people [keeping them from the hour of temptation!], than

¹⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Last Day Events*, p. 182 (emphasis added); cf. 21MR68, RH 6/7/1887.



leave one soul that trusts in him to be overcome by Satan.”¹⁸

It is so bad for the wicked, they want to die (Revelation 9:6), but God does not permit that! This is the fifth Trumpet.

Wonderful is the thought that through this difficult time comes the comforting power of the Latter Rain to the saints.

“God’s people were fitted up and strengthened by the excellent glory which fell upon them in rich abundance, preparing them to endure the hour of temptation. A multitude of voices I heard every where, saying, Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”¹⁹

The wording in Revelation 3:10 does not imply that God’s people will be protected from any kind of trials, but within the trials God provides special strength to persevere.²⁰ In its deepest sense, it is an assurance of **spiritual protection** through the strength God provides.²¹

From the time the law which God calls an abomination is set up (Daniel 12:11), those dramatic time periods of Daniel 12 will have been inaugurated. Daniel 12:7 clearly reveals within that time that a period of persecution for God’s people will occur. That abomination, which is called

¹⁸ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 560 (emphasis added).

¹⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 96 (emphasis added).

²⁰ Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), pp. 192-194.

²¹ Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

in Revelation the “*mark of the beast*,” is copied and promoted by the “*false prophet*.” It makes an image to the papal beast. (A Revelation 13 study)

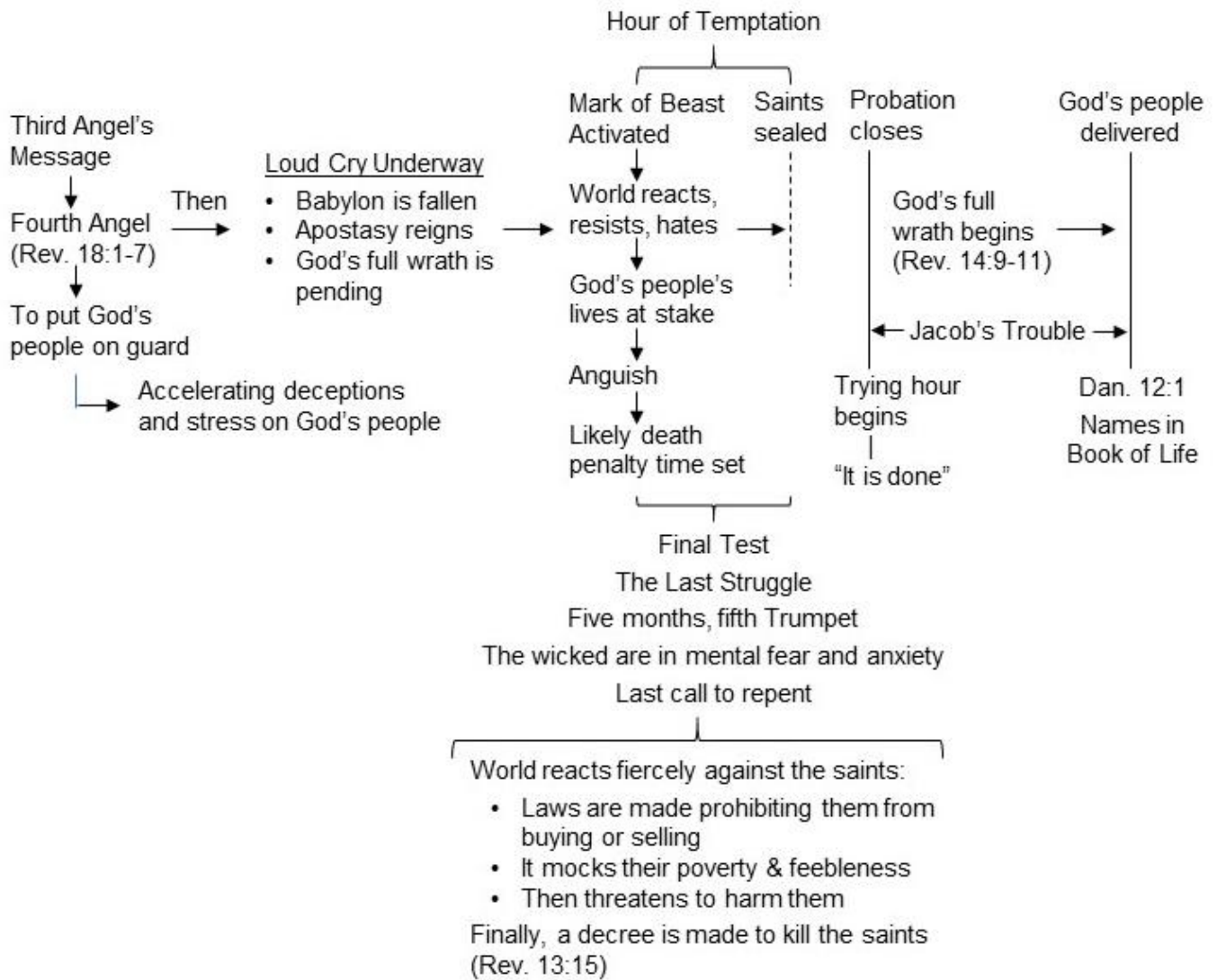
- At the end of time the false prophet, which best applies to the United States, reaches a point where it **lashes out** at God’s true people through oppressive laws (Daniel 11:31, 12:11).
- “The **decree is to go forth** that all who will not receive the mark of the beast shall neither buy nor sell and, finally, that they **shall be put to death**.”²²
- The people of God will be in **great distress**, weeping, and praying, pleading the sure promises of God. The wicked will mock and threaten to destroy. Clearly, they will ridicule, mock and taunt God’s people with words calculated to cut deep. They will charge them with taking an independent position from all the rest of the world. **And as Revelation 13 says, will cut off our resources so they cannot buy nor sell.** They wouldn’t see how one might live without the world and must concede to the customs, practices, and laws of the world, or go out of it. If they are the only people in the world whom the Lord favored the appearances will be against us. They will declare that they have the truth, that miracles were among them, that angels from heaven talked with them, and walked with them, that great power, and signs and wonders were performed among them, and this was the Temporal Millennium, which they had been expecting so long. The whole world will be converted and in harmony with the “*mark of the beast*,” and this little feeble people will stand in defiance of the laws of the land, and the laws of God, and claimed to be the only ones right on the earth.²³

Virtually everything E. G. notes is an affirmation of Biblical prophecy!

Our graphic picture can expand further:

²² White, Ellen G.; *Christ Triumphant*, p. 366.

²³ White, Ellen G.; *Maranatha*, p. 209.



Lest there be any question as to what time this Philadelphia era refers to, Christ again draws on this eschatological theme.²⁴

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Revelation 3:11).

This links with Revelation 22:7, 12 and 20. His Second Coming is in the context of the Philadelphia church.

- Why was this church promised a rapid return of Jesus? The whole message of that church is end time.
- Even more, referring to the **whole book of Revelation**, a similar appeal and setting are noted in Revelation 1:1, 3, 7 and 22:6, collectively!

²⁴ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

Here is the key to understanding: In the context of the fulfillment of this prophecy (even the whole Book of Revelation), Christ's coming is expected.

The “crown to hold fast” is not a kingly one but a crown of victory.

“Jesus tells the church of Smyrna that if they are faithful unto death, He will give them a crown of life. Here the Philadelphians already either possess the crowns [figuratively] or already have one ‘reserved’ in heaven. At the end of his life, Paul told Timothy, ‘*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; [in the future] there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*’ 2 Tim 4:7-8. In either event, it is clear that they have already overcome the beast and his image. However, they are cautioned to hold on to their faith and their relationship with Jesus, implying that they could still lose salvation.”²⁵ Probation still lingers.

How might one lose his/her crown?

- “As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third message, but have not been sanctified through it, abandon their position, and take refuge under the banner of the powers of darkness. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren. When ... [they] are brought before the courts to answer for their faith, these apostates are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the rulers against them.”²⁶
- Many will fall by the way – never to return.

One wonders and marvels at Christ’s love at this time of stress and trial when He speaks these words:

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name” (Revelation 3:12).

The word for “*pillar*” means a prop or support.

- Some of the disciples were pillars (Galatians 2:9).
- The implication here is that these individuals will be special representatives in support of that heavenly kingdom.
- These individuals, the spiritual church, will remain forever a part of the “temple of God” – the very spiritual center of the universe! Amazing!

²⁵ Canter, Bryan; *Revelation, Part 2, Messages to the Seven Churches* (Prophecy Research Initiative document – 2002), p. 19 (emphasis added).

²⁶ White, Ellen G.; *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 426.

Christ now gives special promises to the Philadelphians. ***This is like a marriage vow.*** They will be bonded with the heavenly family by ***“seals of belonging”*** on their foreheads:

1. ***God the Father’s name*** – permanent impress of His character
2. ***Name of the New Jerusalem*** – forever members of this kingdom family (the bride)
3. ***Christ’s new name*** – a mystery in waiting. This will be the name of the groom!

“His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself” (Revelation 19:12, 22:3-4).

“And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads” (Revelation 22:3-4).

Who are those saints?

- ***“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads”*** (Revelation 14:1).
- It will be all those translated at His coming – the 144,000.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Revelation 3:13).

Jesus concludes: Hear, listen, know, what God’s Spirit teaches regarding this church. What a privilege to comply. When ***“delivered,”*** that “Philadelphia factor” will be history!

Philadelphia – the 144,000 plus (another beautiful, deeper study).

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