

# THE SEVEN CHURCHES

## Part 2

### Sardis

***“And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead” (Revelation 3:1).***

Christ identifies Himself in fascinating language. He is the one who:

1. Has the seven Spirits of God
2. Has the Seven stars

We were told in 1:16 and 20 that Christ (*“one like the Son of man”* – 1:13) had the seven stars in His hand. He was depicted as the protector and mentor of the seven churches.

- But what about those seven Spirits?
- Earlier greetings came to the seven churches from Jesus Christ, God the Father and the *“seven spirits”* (Revelation 1:4). These three represent the Trinity.
- Here, Jesus is portrayed as representing the fullness of that Spirit (*“seven”*); later, He is depicted as a lamb with seven eyes (Revelation 5:6; cf. Isaiah 53:7), which symbolize those seven Spirits.

All of God that He represents to the Christian church era comes through the fulness of that Spirit (John 14:26).

Christ is saying: “All the power of heaven is available to you, through Me” (cf. Matthew 28:18). He is coming to the Sardis church with that full power.

Sadly, though the bodies of its members are alive, they are dead!

- *“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away”* (II Timothy 3:5).
- They are active, full of life and perhaps community oriented.
- But they are ***spiritually dead***. They have surrendered their allegiance to Christ.

***“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God” (Revelation 3:2).***

Jesus is warning that though they are really “alive” in outward works, God is still not happy with them.

Here, then, a divine prescription for their spiritual malady:

1. Be watchful – alert – for every opportunity to radically revert to your former allegiance.
2. Build upon those spiritual ideals that still linger.

“In Sardis many had been converted through the preaching of the apostles. The truth had been received as a bright and shining light. But some had forgotten the wonderful manner in which they had received the truth, and Jesus found it necessary to send reproof.

“One after another of the old standardbearers had fallen, and *some had become wearied of the oft-repeated truths. **They desired a new phase of doctrine, more pleasing to many minds.*** They thought they needed a wonderful change, and in their spiritual blindness did not discern that their sophistries would uproot all the experiences of the past.

“But the Lord Jesus could see the end from the beginning. Through John He sent them the warning, ‘Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief.’”<sup>1</sup>

***“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee” (Revelation 3:3).***

To remember recalls the time when they were loyal to God. Specifically, Christ notes, “what you previously heard and received from the apostles.” Those ideals have never changed.

- Repent before it is too late.
- ***“Why repent? Because there have come in faults, in the form of theories so subtle that by the influence of mind upon mind, through the agency of those who have departed from the faith, the wily foe will cause you imperceptibly to be imbued with the spirit that will draw you away from the faith.”***<sup>2</sup>

The last phrase of this verse is weighty.

***“If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” (vs 3)***

<sup>1</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript 34*, 1905 (emphasis added).

<sup>2</sup> White, Ellen G.; *The Paulson Collection of Ellen G. White Letters*, p. 74 (emphasis added).

This is Christ's incentive to the Sardis church and all those who are represented by those people, who are anticipating His coming.

***This text is profound. His coming is not conditional. But His arrival as a "thief" is!***

- The implication is stunning!
- It echoes: *"But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief"* (I Thessalonians 5:4).
- *"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light"* (Ephesians 5:8).

This ties to Romans 13:12: *"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."*

***"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy" (Revelation 3:4).***

There are a few names (people) in Sardis who:

Have not defiled garments  
Shall walk with me in white  
Because they are worthy

The few (a small number) remain who are *"worthy"* to be recognized even by name.

- Their experience is consistent, principled and holy.
- They have not stained their garments – their characters.

These individuals are seen as already being clothed in the righteousness of Christ. They are justified and Christ's promises that into the future they will remain *"cleansed by the blood of the Lamb"* (7:13-14).

- "Christ has carried his humanity into eternity. He stands before God as the representative of our race. *When we are clothed with the wedding garment of his righteousness, we become one with him, and he says of us, 'They shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.'* His saints will behold him in his glory, with no dimming veil between."<sup>3</sup>
- "It is right to love beauty and to desire it; but God desires us to love and seek first the highest beauty, that which is imperishable. No outward adorning can compare in value or loveliness with *that 'meek and quiet spirit,' the 'fine linen, white and clean'* (Revelation 19:14), which all the holy ones of earth will wear. This apparel

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<sup>3</sup> White, Ellen G.; *The Youth's Instructor*, October 28, 1897 (emphasis added).

will make them beautiful and beloved here, and will hereafter be their badge of admission to the palace of the King. His promise is, 'They shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy.' Revelation 3:4."<sup>4</sup>

Those few in Sardis were, in Christ's mind, already clothed in that garment.

Jesus now presents His summation promises:

***"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" (Revelation 3:5).***

The expression "*He that overcometh*" suggests that there is something for every person to gain victory over. This is a sermonette for all who review this church! Christ will invest those people with His character.

- They will be clothed in white raiment (cf. Zechariah 3:1-10) – that wedding garment.
- Their names will not be blotted out of the Book of Life (Exodus 32:32, Ephesians 1:4).
- Jesus even confesses our names before the Father and His angels.

### ***Why God and the Angels?***

- That makes up the family in heaven.
- "Please welcome those whom I will adopt into our family!"

### ***Who might this church represent?***

**Sardis** – apostate Protestantism that brings in false theories.

### **Philadelphia**

The name relates to a type of love that is shared with family members. Even though Christianity apostatized in Asia Minor, it remained strong in this church as in Smyrna!

***"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, angel or "*star*" of this church, Christ identifies Himself as:

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<sup>4</sup> White, Ellen G.; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 523-534 (emphasis added).

1. *“Holy and true”* – unexcelled
2. Having the *“key of David”* – recall that he had two other keys – one for hell, the other for death

**“Holy and true”** – Christ is called the Holy One of God (Mark 1:24, Luke 4:34). In this His deity is introduced.<sup>5</sup> Later, in Revelation 6:10, He is addressed as *“sovereign Lord”* (NIV). The word here for *“true”* is *alethinos*, meaning genuine, faithful to His promises.<sup>6</sup>  
**Together:** “I’m a divine being who keeps His promises!”

**“Key of David”:** David’s kingdom became a symbol of Christ’s kingdom (Ezekiel 21:27, Isaiah 16:5). **The key bearer** to that kingdom was represented at the time of Hezekiah as one of **great authority**. Shebna, who had great authority over the *“house of David,”* lost it because of evil (representing Satan), and it was given to Eliakim (symbolic of Christ) (Isaiah 22:15-22). Eliakim then was seen as having the key to the *“kingdom.”*

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

Christ’s authority is seen as sacred and His decisions irrevocable. His control of that door is His divine judicial prerogative! Beautiful and awesome is what He now says:

***“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 a promise!**
- The door to His kingdom has been opened to the people of the Philadelphia church! 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:

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<sup>5</sup> Beale, Gregory K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan – 1999), p. 283.

<sup>6</sup> Stefanovic, Ranko; *Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs, MI; 2002), p. 139.

- 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 observing this church:

*"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.<sup>7</sup> Their missionary zeal later influenced the Christian church to expand beyond the European frontier, even to Africa and, later, to the Americas!<sup>8</sup>

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 profound 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 – ***those people aren't His.***
- They denied that Jesus was the Messiah and persecuted those who believed that He was.<sup>9</sup>

This reflects the ever-widening gap between Judaism and Christianity. The latter anticipates when *"every knee will bow"* (Philippians 2:10-11; cf. Isaiah 60:14) in

<sup>7</sup> Naden, Roy C.; *The Lamb Among the Beasts* (Review and Herald Publishing Association; Hagerstown, MD; 1996), p. 85.

<sup>8</sup> Doukhan, Jacques B.; *Secrets of Revelation* (The Review and Herald Publishing Association; Hagerstown, MD 21740; 2002), p. 41.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, Alan F.; *Revelation*, p. 514, from Gaebelien, Frank E. (gen. ed.); *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. II (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 49530; 1981), p. 453.

humiliation, acknowledging Christ as the Messiah!<sup>10</sup> These Jews represent those who vehemently oppose Him as Savior.

To that ancient 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 non-Biblical “tradition” on God’s people. Finally, those apostates will see that they were wrong.

**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!** (A profound study related to the saints’ question, “How long?” in Seal five)

**Christ now gives another amazing promise!**

**“Because you have kept my admonition to endure steadfastly, I will also keep you from the hour of testing that is about to come on the whole world to test those who live on the earth” (Revelation 3:10).**

This **is another 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 **trial** or **testing** is globally focused, implicated by the phrase “*them that dwell upon the earth.*”<sup>11</sup>

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

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<sup>10</sup> Stefanovic, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

<sup>11</sup> Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

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

There is a broad and divergent understanding to 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 to sin**.<sup>12</sup> It is the last "testing time"<sup>13</sup> to see where everyone's loyalty irrevocably lies.<sup>14</sup> The wicked world will even try to put God to the test during this time.<sup>15</sup>

- With this fascinating insight, one can conclude that ***this occurs as time is running out***.
- Probation is about to close. It's a very end-time issue.
- This leads to the separation experience when the world will be fully divided into two parts – forever!

***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, 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 even deeper by appealing to the insights of expositor White. She used this phrase in many of her narratives. One can grasp a profound meaning in this "Philadelphia test" when corroborating several quotations.

Introductory thoughts:

"These words [*the hour of temptation*] are important and solemn, and it would be profitable to us should we take them home with us, and ***search the Scriptures in reference to their true meaning***."<sup>16</sup>

"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***."<sup>17</sup> Claiming a loyalty to Christ will not be enough. Faith indelibly fixed on Biblical truth is then required.

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<sup>12</sup> *Gingrich Lexicon*

<sup>13</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

<sup>14</sup> *Thayer Lexicon*

<sup>15</sup> *Friberg Lexicon* (cf. Hebrews 3:8).

<sup>16</sup> White, Ellen G.; *This Day with God*, p. 114 (emphasis added).

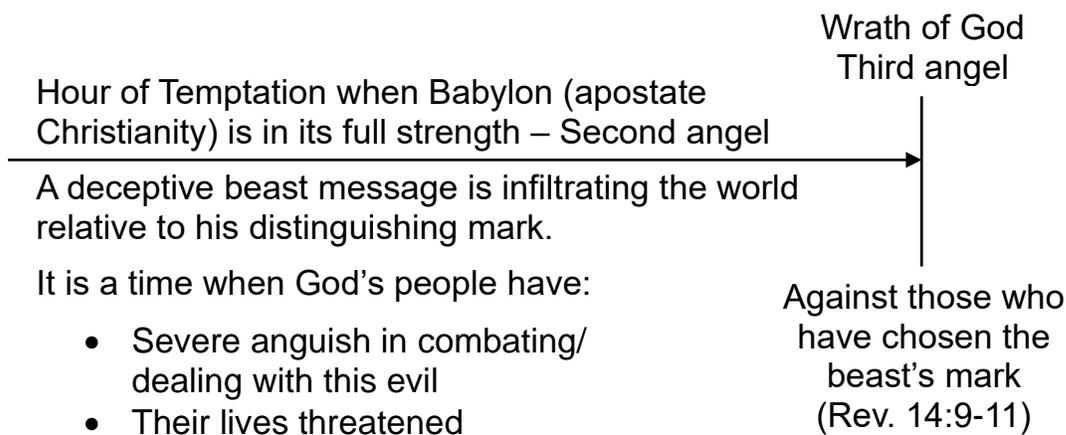
<sup>17</sup> White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 552, 560 (emphasis added).

Regarding the third angel's message: "This message was designed to put the children of God upon their guard, **by showing them the hour of temptation and anguish that was before them.**"<sup>18</sup> As Babylon falls (during "the hour of trial"), God's wrath against those with the mark of the beast will soon burst on the world scene. This is further refined in:

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.*** Said the angel, 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.***"<sup>19</sup>

Following E. G. White's counsel, one must study and know about this hour!

To this point we conclude:



The imagery suggests the time noted 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).

This can be refined even further:

"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***

<sup>18</sup> White, Ellen G.; *The Faith I Live By*, p. 286 (emphasis added).

<sup>19</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 162 (emphasis added).

**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.**"<sup>20</sup> (Daniel 12:1).

**"The work of this angel [fourth angel] comes in at the right time, and joins in the last great work of the third angel's message, as it swells into a loud cry. And the people of God are fitted up every where to stand in the hour of temptation which they are soon to meet. I saw a great light resting upon them, and they united in the message, and fearlessly proclaimed with great power the third angel's message [assume meaning all three angels' messages]."**<sup>21</sup>

**We can now expand the graph:**

	Fourth Angel (Rev. 18:1-5)		Deliverance of God's people (Dan. 12:1)
			Wrath of God Third angel
Clearly, time of the end	Loud Cry begins	Hour of Temptation when Babylon is in its full strength	
	Fitting up God's people to call world out of Babylon & to stand in hour of temptation	A deceptive beast message is infiltrating the world relative to his distinguishing mark (an abomination to God).  It is a time when His people have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Severe anguish in combating/ dealing with this evil</li> <li>• Their lives might be threatened</li> </ul>	Against those who have chosen the beast's mark (Rev. 14:9-11)

**What severe time comes to the "whole world" (when the saints are protected) before God finally steps in with the seven Vials of His wrath?**

- There is one distinct area that matches what is described here. It is the **fifth Trumpet** – the "*first woe*."
- In that 5<sup>th</sup> Trumpet Satan, a star that had fallen from heaven, is given the key to "hell" or the "*bottomless pit*." Jesus had that key (Revelation 1:18).
  1. Satan unlocked that place of confinement for the wicked angels.
  2. As they escaped – it looked like a great furnace with smoke coming out so thick it darkened the air!

<sup>20</sup> White, Ellen G.; *The Signs of the Times*, January 17, 1884 (emphasis added).

<sup>21</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 193 (emphasis added).

3. The light of truth is now fading. Those minions appear as **“locusts.”**

The **“locusts”** = Satan’s evil angels. Shaped like **“horses”** = prepared for battle. **“Crowns of gold”** = Satan’s deception that he holds the key of victory. **“Teeth”** like a lion = ferocious/savage. **“Breastplate of iron”** = covers its heart, it will never change. **“Face”** like human = intelligent beings. **“Woman’s hair”** = seductive.

The name of their “king” **Abaddon/Apollyon** = “destroyer”

***During the five-month period of this Trumpet, Satan has full reign to evangelize evil (just as God’s people will have full reign to witness under the Latter Rain) (Revelation 11:5-6).***

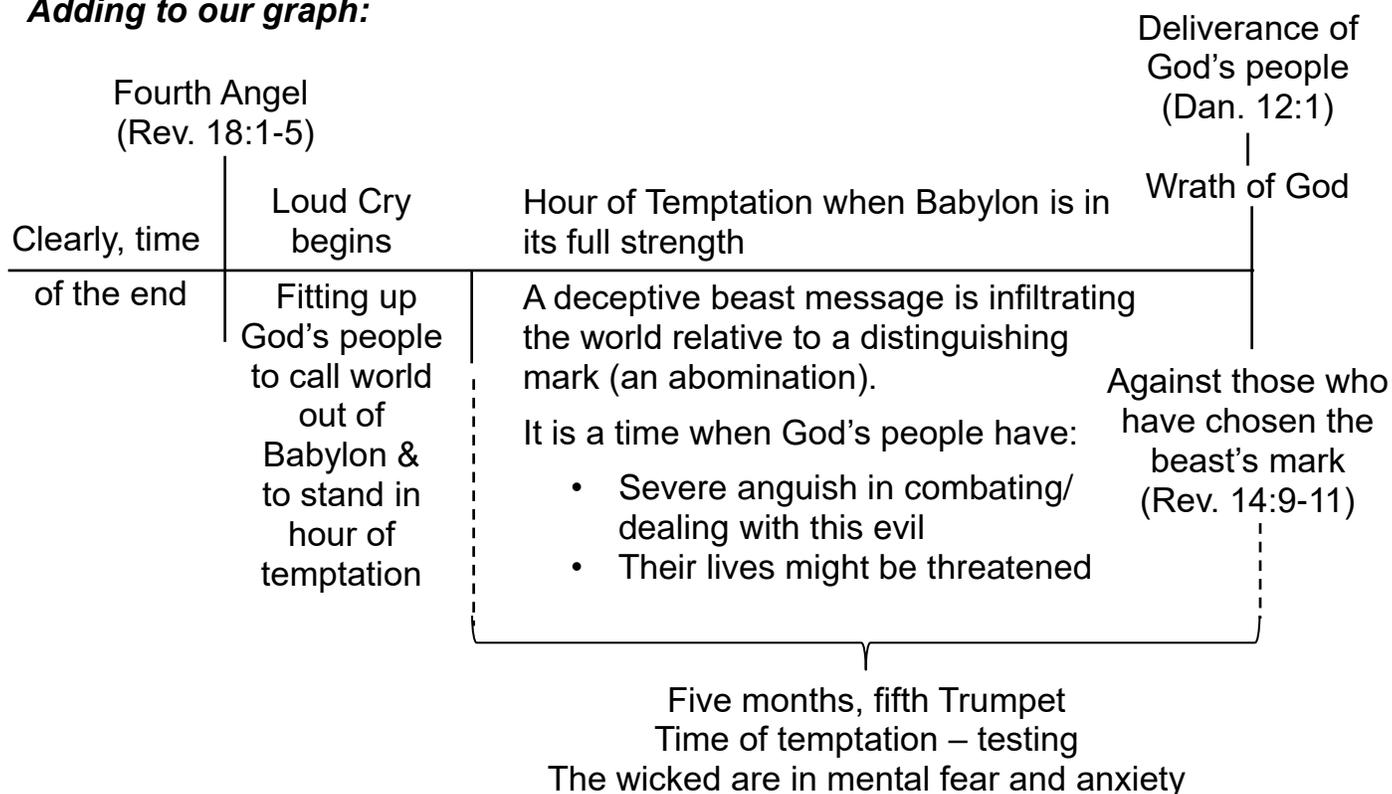
- This is the “final standoff” between good and evil.
- This is apparently when the decree will go out to kill all the saints at a predetermined time (just as it happened in Esther’s day)!
- It’s important to recall that by then the first four Trumpets have begun their destructive work.

“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.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Last Day Events*, p. 182 (emphasis added); cf. 21MR68, RH 6/7/1887.

**Adding to our graph:**



Riveting this is another thought from E. G. White, addressing, again, 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 leave one soul that trusts in him to be overcome by Satan.”<sup>23</sup>

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

<sup>23</sup> White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 560 (emphasis added).

**“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.”<sup>24</sup>

The wording in verse 10 does not imply that God’s people will be protected from any kind of trials, but within the trials God provides special strength.<sup>25</sup> In its deepest sense, it is an assurance of spiritual protection through the strength God provides.<sup>26</sup>

From the time the law which God calls an abomination is set up, 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 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)

- 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 [a decree].”<sup>27</sup>
- “I saw our people in great distress, weeping, and praying, pleading the sure promises of God, while the wicked were all around us, mocking us, and threatening to destroy us. They ridiculed our feebleness, they mocked at the smallness of our numbers, and taunted us with words calculated to cut deep. They charged us with taking an independent position from all the rest of the world. ***They had cut off our resources so that we could not buy nor sell, and referred to our abject poverty and stricken condition.*** They could not see how we could live without the world; we were dependent upon the world, and we must concede to the customs, practices, and laws of the world, or go out of it. If we were the only people in the world whom the Lord favored the appearances were awfully against us. They declared that they had 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 was converted and in harmony with the Sunday law, and this little feeble people stood out in defiance of the laws of the land, and the laws of God, and claimed to be the only ones right on the earth.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 96 (emphasis added).

<sup>25</sup> Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), pp. 192-194.

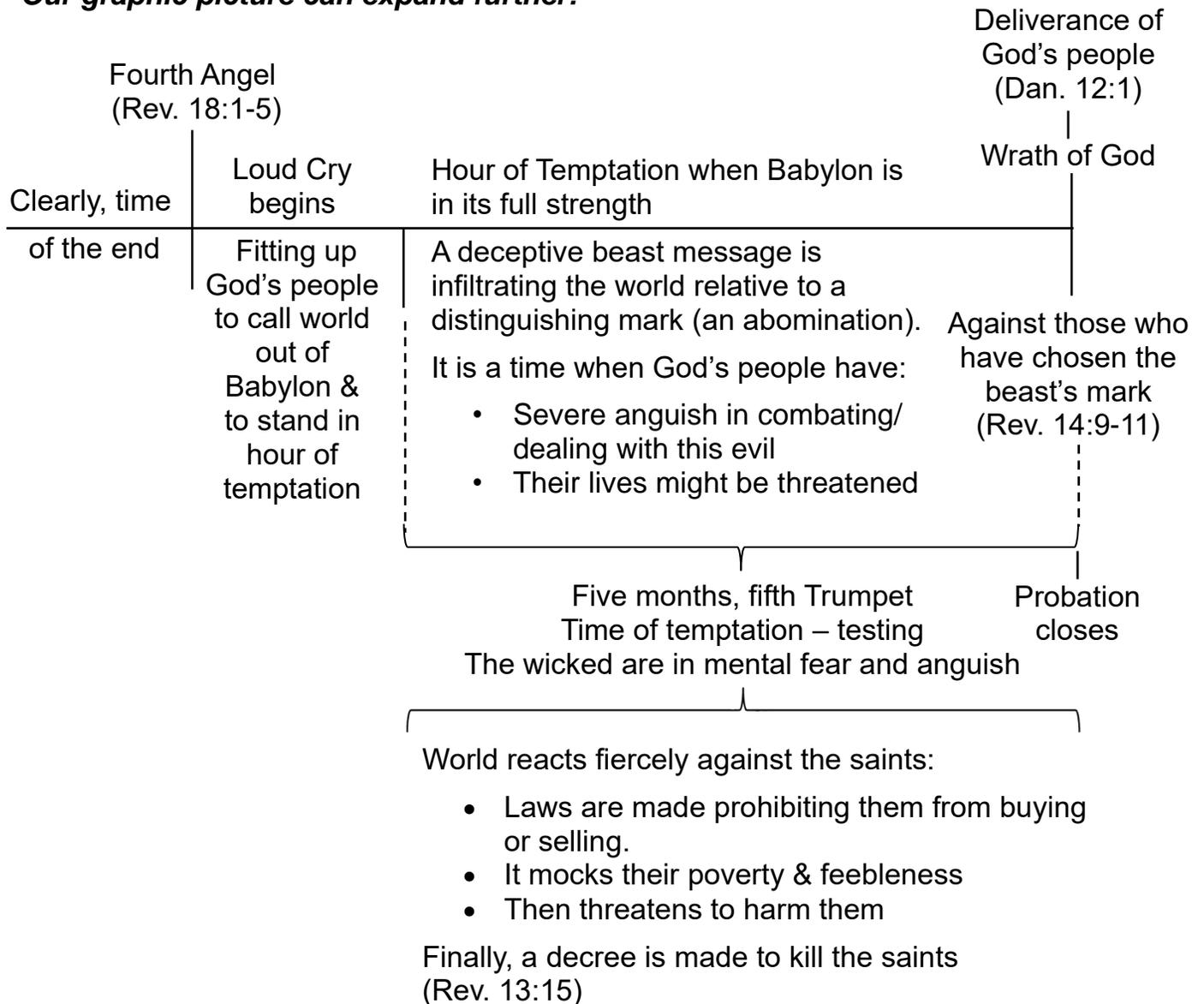
<sup>26</sup> Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

<sup>27</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Christ Triumphant*, p. 366.

<sup>28</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Maranatha*, p. 209.

Virtually everything noted in expositor White’s thoughts above are an affirmation of Biblical prophecy!

**Our graphic picture can expand further:**



Lest there be any question as to what time this Philadelphia era refers to, Christ again draws contextually on this as an eschatological theme.<sup>29</sup>

**“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:

<sup>29</sup> Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

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

**Here is the key: In the context of this prophecy (even the Book of Revelation) being fulfilled, Christ's soon 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.”<sup>30</sup> 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 Sabbath-keepers 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.”<sup>31</sup>
- 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:

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<sup>30</sup> Canter, Bryan; *Revelation, Part 2, Messages to the Seven Churches* (Prophecy Research Initiative document – 2002), p. 19 (emphasis added).

<sup>31</sup> White, Ellen G.; *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 426.

***“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 church, will remain forever a part of the “temple of God” – the very spiritual center of the universe! Amazing!

Christ now gives special promises to this church. ***This is like a marriage certificate***, becoming unified with the heavenly family with “*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 likely be the “family” 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).*

*“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.

***“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** – 144,000 plus.

## Laodicea

This church shares with Sardis the unfortunate distinction of receiving no commendation from God.

***“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God” (Revelation 3:14).***

The name means “judgment has come.” It is a church without Jesus. He identifies Himself here as:

- The “*Amen*” – the one eternally true and unchangeable
- The “*faithful and true witness*” – He conveys what He has seen and heard (from the Father) perfectly and with clarity.
- “*The beginning of Creation*” – He was the active “cause” of Creation.

***“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:15-16).***

“Those who zealously oppose Christ (cold), and those who zealously serve Him (hot), have one thing in common: they both take Him seriously. The one who neither opposes nor serves offers Christ the ultimate insult – affirming His existence, but not taking Him seriously.”<sup>32</sup>

Coldness is a condition where conversion is still possible.<sup>33</sup> Being hot is related to the urgent effort to please Him.

The lukewarm state is dangerous. It reflects blindness to self, blindness to spiritual issues and blindness to Christ’s love. Jesus is making a cognitive and emotional appeal to the Laodicean congregation – ***You have a nauseating problem.***

- This means their prayers will soon not be accepted by Him
- Nor their religious exercises endorsed.
- They risk ejection from the body of Christ.

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<sup>32</sup> Gregg, *Op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>33</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 176.

***“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17).***

Physical

Spiritual

They say:	<p><i>“I am rich”</i></p> <p><i>“Increased with goods”</i></p> <p><i>“Have need of nothing”</i></p>	<p>I have the <i>“truth”</i></p> <p>I’m comfortable where I am</p> <p>My increased light is unparalleled –</p> <p>Don’t need any new Spiritual advantages –</p> <p>no need to change</p>
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This echoes: *“Ephraim boasts, ‘I am very rich; I have become wealthy. With all my wealth they will not find in me any iniquity or sin’” (Hosea 12:8).*

God has a different view. They are really worthless (Hosea 12:11).

- Wretched – They sensed societal contentment, but God saw them as rejects.
- Miserable – They felt good about themselves but were terrible Christians.
- Poor – They felt rich but were destitute spiritually.
- Blind – In a city known for eye medicines, they couldn’t see how they really were.
- Naked – In a city known for its woolen garments, they were without clothes.

“What is it that constitutes the wretchedness, the nakedness of those who feel rich and increased with goods?—It is the *want of the righteousness of Christ*. In their own righteousness they are represented as clothed with filthy rags, and yet in this condition they flatter themselves that they are clothed upon with Christ’s righteousness. Could deception be greater?”<sup>34</sup>

Now comes eternally bearing advice.

***“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see” (Revelation 3:18).***

Counsel

Why

Problem (vs 17)

Buy of me gold	that thou mayest be rich	poor
Buy of me white raiment	that thou mayest be clothed	naked
Buy of me salve	that thou mayest see	blind

<sup>34</sup> White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, August 7, 1894 (emphasis added).

- **“buy”** – *“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price”* (Isaiah 55:1). Repent – exchange your sins for His wares.
- **“gold”** – Tested/purified, faith and love (trial of our faith even more precious than gold – I Peter 1:6-7)
- **“white raiment”** – Holiness, Christ’s righteousness
  - *“Blessed is he that keepeth his garment”* (Revelation 16:15).
  - The man without a wedding garment is cast out (Matthew 22:11-14).
  - This raiment is white – washed in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14).
- **“eyesalve”** – This is the spiritual anointing from God’s Spirit.

“Therefore we need to be exceedingly careful, and walk humbly before God, that we may have spiritual eyesalve that we may distinguish the working of the Holy Spirit of God from the working of that spirit that would bring in wild license and fanaticism. ‘By their fruits ye shall know them’ (Matt. 7:20). Those who are really beholding Christ will be changed into His image, even by the Spirit of the Lord, and will grow up to the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit of God will inspire men with love and purity; and refinement will be manifest in their characters.”<sup>35</sup>

***“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent”***  
**(Revelation 3:19).**

This admonition suggests that it is not too late.

This “love” is *phileo*. God has affection for us so much that He is willing to admonish, convict and even rebuke us. If that isn’t enough, He is willing (in love) to punish (teach) the consequences of rebelling.

***“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me”*** (Revelation 3:20).

He is outside of the church – our hearts. He positions Himself right at the door.

- He has been thrust outside.
- He wants to be invited back in!

Jesus takes the initiative. He knocks (with a heavy blow) and calls out to open the door. This is profound!

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<sup>35</sup>White, Ellen G.; *Selected Messages*, bk 1, p. 142.

Then we must be aware:

- “I saw that many have so much rubbish piled up at the door of their heart that they cannot get the door open. Some have difficulties between themselves and their brethren to remove. Others have evil tempers, selfish covetousness, to remove before they can open the door. Others have rolled the world before the door of their heart, which bars the door. All this rubbish must be taken away, and then they can open the door and welcome the Saviour in.”<sup>36</sup>
- We must then open the door.

Once in, He fellowships with a meal – a sign of a trusting friendship.

***“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Revelation 3:21).***

This is another profound message. Christ’s victorious life is our example. Christ could have sinned – but He didn’t.

- “The question is, Shall we keep on sinning as though it were an impossibility for us to overcome? How are we to overcome? *As Christ overcame, and that is the only way.* He prayed to His heavenly Father. We can do the same. When tempted to speak wrong and do wrong resist Satan and say, I will not surrender my will to your control. I will cooperate with divine power and through grace be conqueror.– Manuscript 83, 1891.”<sup>37</sup>
- “*Man must pass over the ground over which Christ has passed. As Christ overcame every temptation which Satan brought against Him, so man is to overcome. And those who strive earnestly to overcome are brought into a oneness with Christ that the angels in heaven can never know.*”<sup>38</sup>

Then comes the promise that He will permit the saints to sit with Him on the Father’s throne! That is the throne of the universe! This is commensurate with the promise of our being kings and priests (Revelation 1:6, 5:10).

What church belongs to this group?

1. Those who profess to keep the law of God, and yet are not doers of it.<sup>39</sup>
2. Those who have become so much like the world that there is no difference that can be seen.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 143.

<sup>37</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Selected Messages*, bk 3, p. 195 (emphasis added).

<sup>38</sup> White, Ellen G.; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol 7, p. 926 (emphasis added).

<sup>39</sup> White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, October 17, 1899.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, August 20, 1903.

***“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches”  
(Revelation 3:22).***

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