

“THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION”

Introduction

There are significant periods of stress, helplessness and even persecution that lie ahead for God’s people. These are Biblically predicted and purposefully designed by heaven’s wisdom. They have the potential to bring those claiming to be His people into a final ***irrevocable commitment*** to Jesus Christ.

At the same time, those periods of “tribulation” are intended to ***polarize the spiritual focus*** of earth’s inhabitants.

Adventists identify three distinct such periods of “trouble” or “tribulation”:

Time of Trouble – ONE [Calamities]

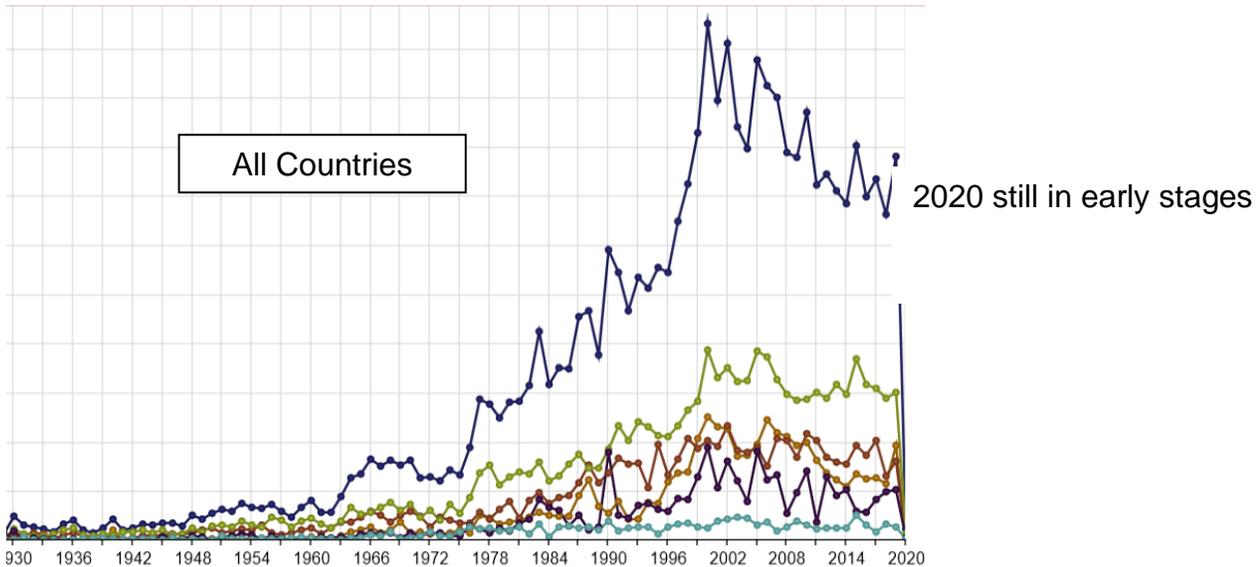
“Men in responsible positions.... from the sacred desk ***will urge upon the people*** the observance of the first day of the week, pleading tradition and custom [not Biblically based] in behalf of this man-made institution. They will point to ***calamities on land and sea – to the storms of wind, the floods, the earthquakes, the destruction by fire*** – as judgments indicating God’s displeasure because Sunday is not sacredly observed. ***These calamities will increase more and more, one disaster will follow close upon the heels of another***, and those who make void the law of God will point to the few who are keeping the Sabbath of the fourth commandment ***as the ones who are bringing wrath upon the world***. This falsehood is Satan’s device that he may ensnare the unwary.”¹

“Legislators will yield to the demand for Sunday laws. But those who fear God cannot accept an institution that violates a precept of the Decalogue. On this battlefield will be fought the last great conflict in the controversy between truth and error. As in the days of Esther and Mordecai, ***the Lord will vindicate*** His truth and His people.”²

- There are worsening trends in natural disasters (top line in graph).

¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Southern Watchman*, June 28, 1904. *Christian Service* p. 155 (emphasis added).

² White, Ellen G.; *Prophets and Kings*, p. 606 (emphasis added).



https://www.emdat.be/emdat_db/

Then these laws will seem ineffective! A change then comes:

Time of Trouble – TWO [“Little Time of Trouble” – enforcement of Sunday laws (calamities and economy)]

“Secular rulers and religious leaders will unite to **enforce** the observance of the Sunday; and **as milder measures fail**, the most oppressive laws will be enacted.”³

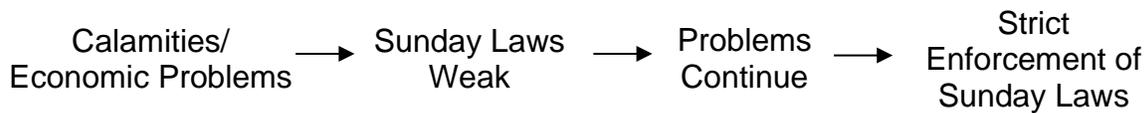
“And **then** the great deceiver will **persuade men to charge all their troubles** on those whose obedience to God’s commandments is a perpetual reproof to transgressors [they have guilt]. It will be declared that men offend God by the violation of Sunday, that **this sin has brought calamities** which will not cease until Sunday observance shall be strictly enforced. ‘Those who destroy reverence for Sunday are **preventing restoration of divine favor and prosperity.**’ [guilt projection] Thus the accusation urged of old against the servant of God will be repeated. ‘When Ahab saw Elijah, ... Ahab said unto him, art thou he that troubleth Israel?’ 1 Kings 18:17, 18.”⁴

- The disasters and a significant economic depression will be felt so strongly that it will lead to a call for strict enforcement of Sunday laws that have already been passed.

³ White, Ellen G.; *The Spirit of Prophecy*, p. 444 (emphasis added).

⁴ White, Ellen G.; *From Here to Forever*, p. 360 (emphasis added).

- The value of the dollar is sinking:



<https://www.officialdata.org/us/inflation/1855?amount=1>

This enforcement phase of the Sunday laws will lead to **persecution**. This is referenced in many ways in the Bible. Here's one from Revelation and one from Daniel:

- *And it was given unto him to **make war with the saints**, and to overcome them:* (Rev. 13:7 KJV) (associated with a timing prophecy and the mark of the beast).
- *“Then I heard the man clothed in linen who was over the waters of the river as he raised both his right and left hands to the sky and made an oath by the one who lives forever: “It is for a time, times, and half a time. Then, when **the power of the one who shatters [persecutes] the holy people has been exhausted**, all these things will be finished”* (Daniel 12:7 – NET) (associated with a timing prophecy and the abomination law).

“It has been shown that the United States is the power represented by the beast with lamblike horns, and that **this prophecy** (Revelation 13) **will be fulfilled when the United States shall enforce Sunday observance**, which Rome claims as the special acknowledgment of her supremacy.⁵

⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Darkness Before Dawn*, p. 27 (emphasis added).

“A great crisis awaits the people of God. Very soon our nation will attempt to **enforce** upon all the observance of the first day of the week as a sacred day. In doing this ***they will not scruple to compel men against the voice of their own conscience*** to observe the day the nation declares to be the Sabbath. – RH Extra, Dec. 11, 1888.”⁶

“Trial and persecution will come to all who, in obedience to the Word of God, refuse to worship this false sabbath. **Force is the last resort of every false religion.**”⁷

Time of Trouble – THREE [“Jacob’s Trouble” – after probation closes]

Again, there are many allusions to this period of time in Scripture. Here are two:

- “At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. ***There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered***” (Daniel 12:1 – NIV).
- “For then shall be ***great tribulation***, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be (Matthew 24:21 KJV).
- Revelation 16 – seven-vial plagues occur during that time (cf. Revelation 15:6-7).

This will be a time of horrible stress for God’s people, with death threats and the final stages of de-creation of the world!

There is another mostly overlooked “time of trouble,” called “The Hour of Temptation.” That is now our focus here.

Of John’s seven churches, Christ had nothing negative to say regarding two of them – Smyrna and Philadelphia (incidentally, the churches were not numbered).

- Smyrna
 - The church of persecution and martyrdom
 - Faithful unto death, they would receive “*the crown of life.*”
- Philadelphia
 - The church of the 144,000

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 144 (emphasis added).

⁷ White, Ellen G.; *The Signs of the Times*, May 6, 1897, 7BC 976 (emphasis added).

- The messages are specifically for us today. They are described as having the “*crown of life*” and are sealed!

Within this latter church there is something that grabs our attention:

“The Philadelphia Factor” – “*The Hour of Temptation*” (Revelation 3:10).

- To each church Jesus begins by telling them ***how He wants that group to perceive Him!***
- Here’s His description for 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).

- Jesus is the “*holy and true*” – and
- He holds the key of David.
 - In Revelation Jesus has two keys.
 - One: to the Kingdom of God (referred to here) and Two: to “*hell*” or, as it is called, the abyss, which he gave temporarily to Satan (Revelation 9:1).

Holy and True:

- Christ is called the Holy One of God (Mark 1:24, Luke 4:34).
- In Greek this means that He is unique, elevated and set aside. Here, He is also faithful to all His promises. To us, He is the supreme Savior who is omnipotent, omniscient and who loves us supremely.

That “***Key of David***” is interesting. The ancient kingdom of King David became a symbol of God’s kingdom that will soon begin, and which will have no end.

- Jesus is symbolized here as having the key to that kingdom.
- It really means: “***I have the key to the door into that heavenly place!***”
“I am the door keeper!”

Christ has authority over who goes into heaven and who doesn’t. None can change His mind. Why?

- Jesus says to all the churches, “I know all about you!” It is a wakeup call to listen – pay attention. Soon you will not be able to change.

- “What does He know about me?” “What does He know about you?”
- In your own heart, think: If you approached that door right now and said to Him: “I want to go into heaven”:
 - Would He unlock and open that door?
 - Or would He say, “*depart.*” In Matthew 25:41 “*depart*” in the Greek actually alludes to “*prepare for the eternal fire.*”

That door – that key – in Christ’s hand means everything to us! (right now)

Now comes an amazing text within this special Philadelphia 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).*

- There’s that “I know.” He knows all about the people in that Philadelphia Church.
- To them: ***He has already opened the door!*** Amazing! No person can now shut it!
- When does this occur? Apparently on or shortly after the Revelation 11:1 events occur. More on that shortly!

Adventists love to talk about “striving to be among the 144,000.” We should also say “strive to be part of that Philadelphia church!”

- They are symbolically the same.
- Something holy, that Jesus likes, is going on with this group of people.

Jesus appreciates those represented by this church, in spite of their “**weakness.**” (They have little strength.)

- It doesn’t say what that actually means. But:
- They are genuine Christians.
 - They obey His wishes.
 - They don’t deny His name.
 - They are patient (vs 10).

Paul wrote something interesting:

- “*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).
- You might be weak, but your influence for Jesus can be strong!

You might be interested to know that the historical Philadelphia church sent out missionaries into the European area, Africa and, later, through their descendants, to America.

- ***They actively helped spread the gospel – just like the 144,000 will!***
- One view of the “*two witnesses*” in Revelation 11 alludes to the Smyrna and Philadelphia churches.

Jesus now sounds an alarm.

“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 that favored community were dishonest Jews – Judaizers.
- Christ disassociated Himself from them and even said that they really belonged to the church of Satan.
- Christ was pointed: they are dishonest – they don’t belong in God’s kingdom.

E. G. White discusses apostates at the end within the church:

“They who in the days of their prosperity despised Christ and the humble ones who followed in his footsteps, men who would not humble their dignity to bow to Jesus Christ, who hated his despised cross, now are prostrate in the mire of the earth. ***Their greatness has all at once left them, and they do not hesitate to bow to the earth at the feet of the saints.*** They then realize with terrible bitterness that they are eating the fruit of their own way, and being filled with their own devices. In their supposed wisdom they turned away from the high, eternal reward, rejected the heavenly inducement, for earthly gain. The glitter and tinsel of earth fascinated them, and in their supposed wisdom they became fools.... They became fools in the eyes of God and his heavenly angels, while men of worldly ambition thought them wise. Now their supposed wisdom is all foolishness, and their prosperity their destruction. Again rings forth in shrieks of fearful, heart-rending anguish, ‘Rocks and mountains, fall on us, and hide us

from the face of Him who sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?' To the caves of the earth as a covert they flee, but they fail to be such then."⁸

This typifies many in God's last-day church before He comes. Many will apostatize out of God's church. Be careful – be aware – lean on God's Word, not man's word. Watch for those who are trying to divide. It also generally applies to the world, to those who resisted a conviction of what was right.

Now we come to the “Philadelphia Factor” – Remember – this is the church of the 144,000.

*“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).*

1. The Greek word for “temptation” (*peirasmos – pi-ras-mos*) also means “test.” What is God “testing?”
2. It is His ***final examination*** of people all over the world, a defined stress/trial/tribulation. ***It is a period, an event, that clarifies humanity's final reaction to right and wrong.***
3. The Philadelphia church will be protected! But:

This is the Philadelphia Factor.

- It precedes Jacob's Trouble or the “*great tribulation*” – as we will see.
- It leads to the point in time when the world becomes divided into two parts – forever (the sheep and the goats that Jesus talked about in Matthew 25).
- It is when everyone decides their eternal destiny.

Bible scholars differ as to its meaning – so, we turn to expositor White for insight.

Looking deeper:

The third angel “proclaimed a fearful warning, ***the most terrible threatening ever borne to man. This message was designed to [1] put the children of God upon their guard, and [2] show them the hour of temptation and anguish that was before them....*** they will be brought into close combat with

⁸ White, Ellen G; *The Review and Herald*, April 27, 1886 (emphasis added).

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.***⁹

1. The Third Angel's Message (and really the Fourth Angel's Message also) warns of what terrible experiences lies ahead, which God will finally react to with wrath.
2. There will be painful challenges and trials for the saints during the "mark of the beast crisis" (Revelation 13:13-17).
3. This does not yet allude to Jacob's Trouble.
4. The issue will become a life-and-death matter.

These points will become clearer as we proceed.

There's more:

"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 [Christ steps into the fray] 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.*** (Daniel 12:1)."¹⁰

- It will be the peak of earth's struggle regarding God's law.
- God's wrath will begin during this time.
- This imagery anticipates the time presented in Revelation 13:7a, 13-17.
- Though the deliverance comes later, they will be secure.

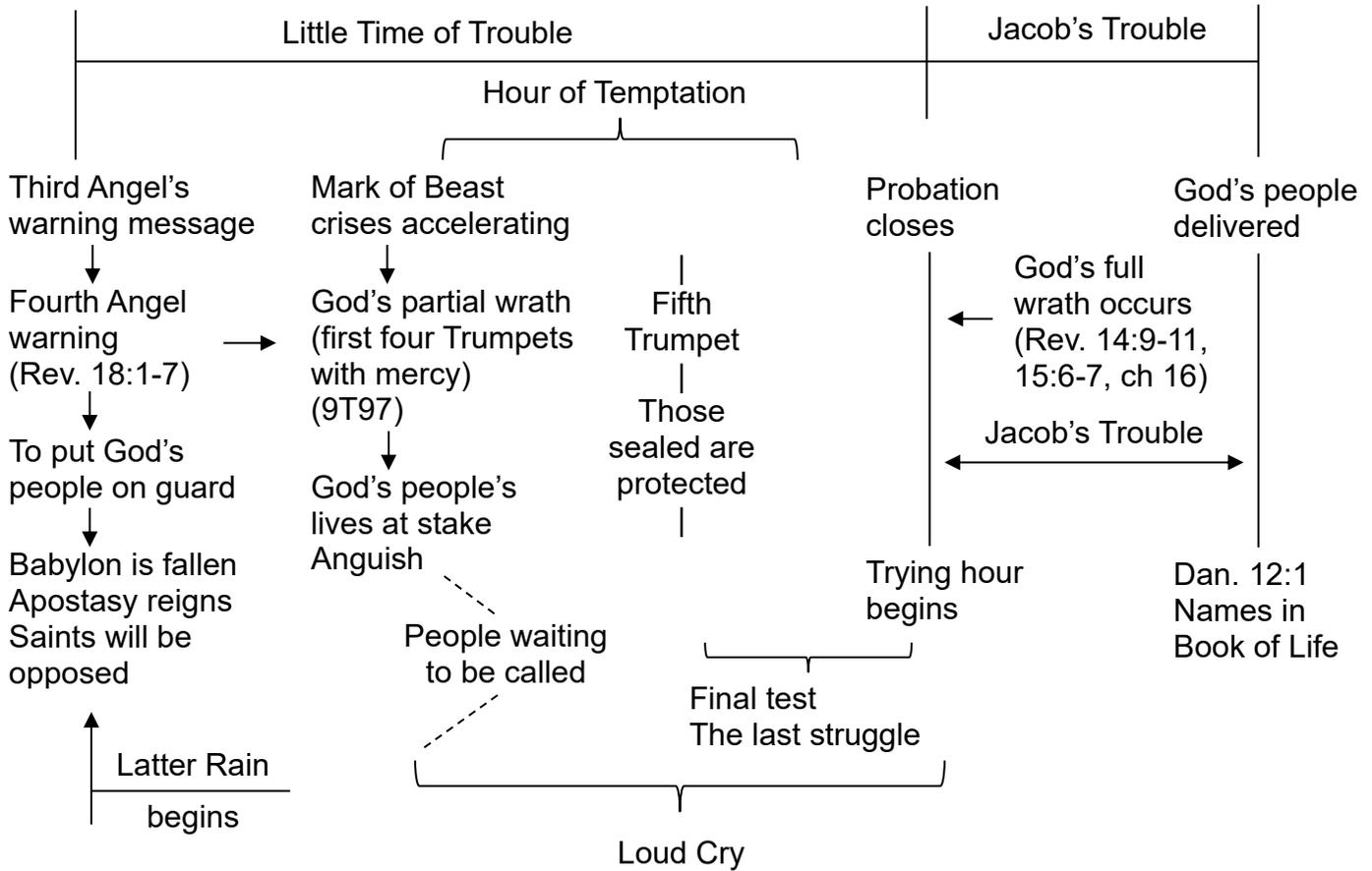
"There are many with whom the Spirit of God is striving. ***The time of God's destructive judgments is the time of mercy for those who have no opportunity to learn what is truth.*** Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; his hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter [judicial eternal decisions have already occurred for many]. Large numbers will be admitted who in these last days hear the truth for the first time. The Lord calls upon every believer to consecrate

⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 162 (emphasis added).

¹⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Signs of the Times*, January 17, 1884 (emphasis added).

himself wholly to his service. All are to work for him, according to their several ability.”¹¹

Sunday Law Enforcement



- “And he [the 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 is consistent with the red horse Seal (Revelation 6:4).
- It is consistent with the mark of the beast crisis.
- This experience parallels the story of Esther. So determined to bring deliverance to the Jews, she told Mordacai, “Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is **not** according to the law: and **if I perish, I perish**” (Esther 4:16).

God's people at this time will be breaking the Sunday law(s).

¹¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, July 5, 1905 (emphasis added).

This “**hour of temptation**” becomes the “final test” and “the last struggle” for God’s people shortly before probation closes, and for the whole world:

There’s more:

“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.*”¹²

- Passing this test opens the way to receive the seal of God!
- The Philadelphia church is assured that they will obtain that Seal!

“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 [1] name of my God, and [2] 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 [3] my new name” (Revelation 3:12).

What else happens during this terrible period of time?

- The answer is in the Trumpets – God’s wrath with mercy, especially the fifth Trumpet – the “*first woe*” occurs (Revelation 9:1-12).
 - During that five-month woe, Satan has full reign to evangelize evil (just as God’s special witnesses will have full rein to evangelize under the Latter Rain – the Loud Cry) (Revelation 11:5-6). God warns Satan not to touch those already sealed.
 - Again, 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.

“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

¹² White, Ellen G.; *The Faith I Live By*, p. 339 (emphasis added).

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.***¹³

Imagine all of Satan's angels released from the abyss [the fifth Trumpet]! 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 that 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.”¹⁴

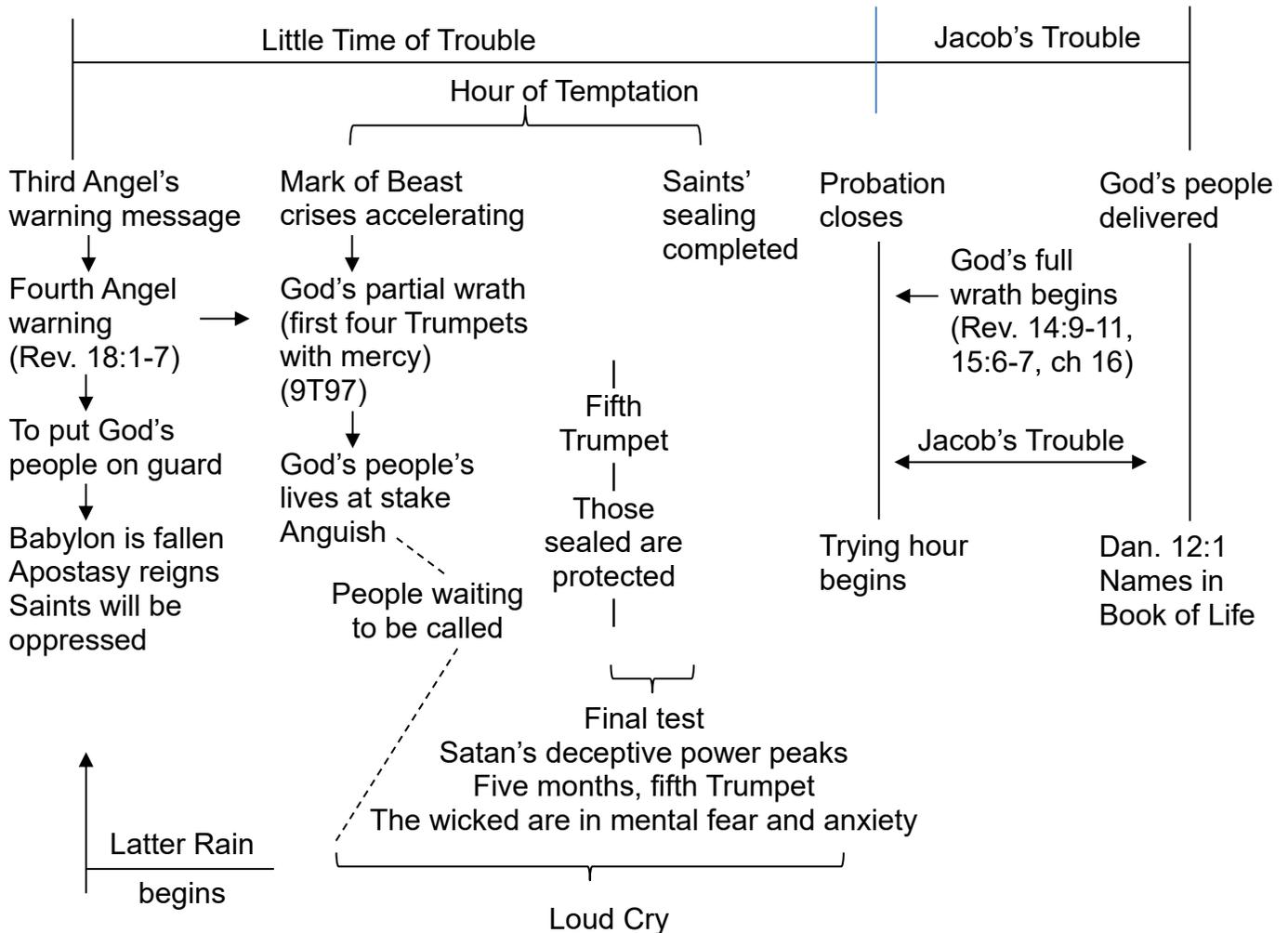
It is not going to be easy!

- Note above how we are purified.
- By obeying – by copying Jesus.

A summation of these quotations and many more leads us to this flow of information.

¹³ White, Ellen G.; *Last Day Events*, p. 182 (emphasis added); cf. 21MR68, RH 6/7/1887.

¹⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 560 (emphasis added).



It is so bad for the wicked, they want to die (Revelation 9:6), but God does not permit that! This, again, 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.”¹⁵

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

¹⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 96 (emphasis added).

strength to persevere.¹⁶ In its deepest sense, it is an assurance of **spiritual protection** through the strength God provides.¹⁷

- “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**.”¹⁸
- “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.”¹⁹

It is not clear, but it appears that this will be made during the fifth Trumpet. A date is set for their deaths, likely not distant into the future. They will be delivered at the time it is to go into effect!

“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book.’ When this time of trouble comes, every case is decided; there is no longer probation, no longer mercy for the impenitent. The seal of the living God is upon His people. This small remnant, unable to defend themselves in the deadly conflict with the powers of earth that are marshaled by the dragon host, make God their defense. The decree has been passed by the highest earthly authority that they shall worship the beast and receive his mark under pain of persecution and death.

¹⁶ Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), pp. 192-194.

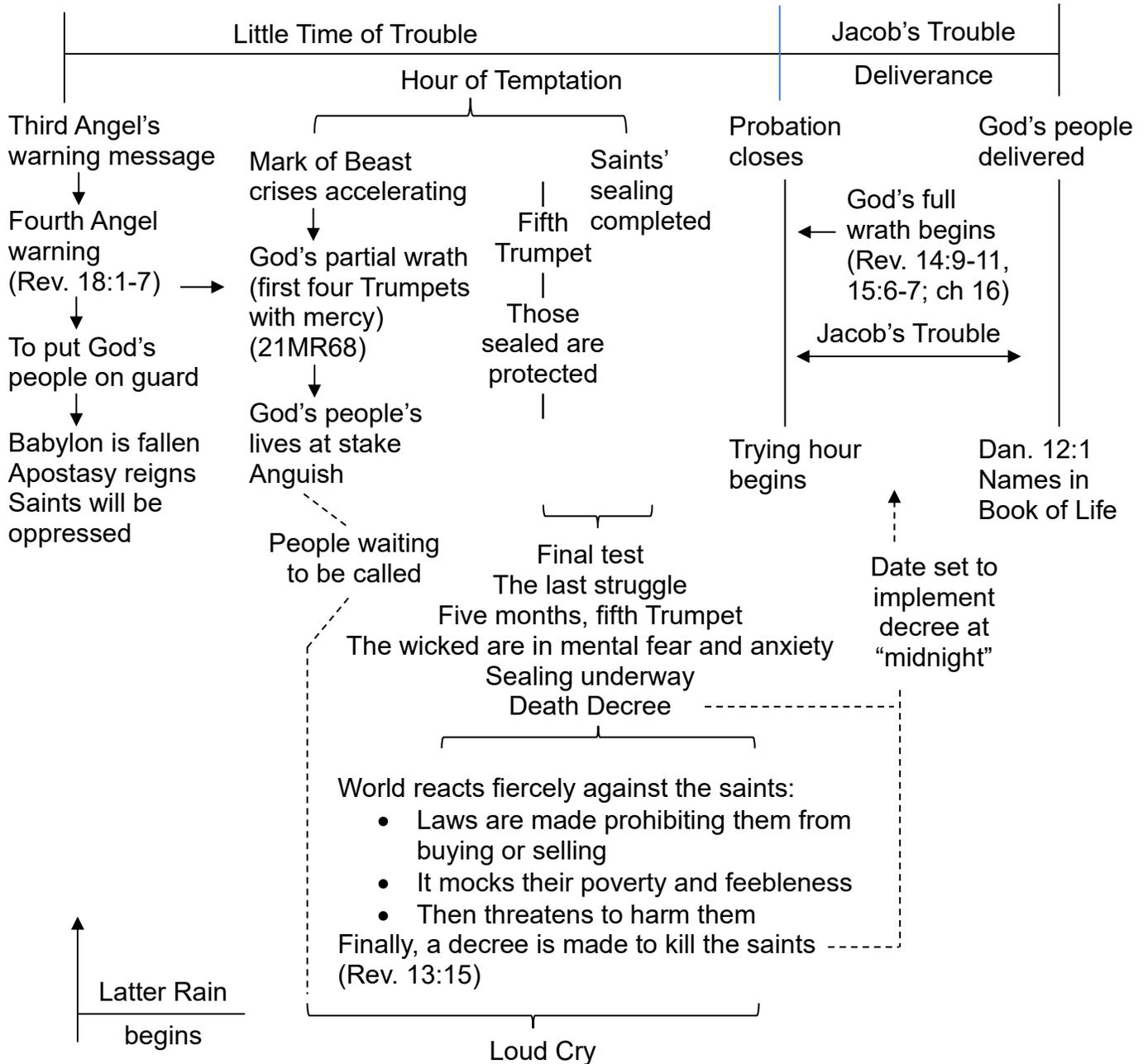
¹⁷ Beale, Gregory K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan – 1999), p. 292.

¹⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Christ Triumphant*, p. 366 (emphasis added).

¹⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Maranatha*, p. 209 (emphasis added).

May God help His people now, for ***what can they then do in such a fearful conflict without His assistance!***²⁰

“It is at midnight that God manifests His power for the deliverance of His people. The sun appears, shining in its strength. Signs and wonders follow in quick succession. The wicked look with terror and amazement upon the scene, while the righteous behold with solemn joy the tokens of their deliverance.”²¹



²⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 212 (emphasis added).

²¹ White, Ellen G.; *Darkness before Dawn*, p. 46.

Lest there be any question as to what time this Philadelphia era refers to, Christ again draws on this eschatological theme.²²

“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 greater message of that church is end time, when it will be under great trial – the Philadelphia factor. It has patience.
- Even more, this period refers to the ***whole book of Revelation***; a similar appeal and setting are noted in Revelation 1:1, 3, 7 and 22:6, collectively!

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 eagerly anticipated!

Sealing Promises – as previously noted:

“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).

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, family name
2. ***Name of the New Jerusalem*** – forever citizens of this kingdom (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).

²² Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

*“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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