

KEEP YOUR GARMENTS SPOTLESS

Keep your garments spotless. With a sermon title like that, what do you suppose is meant by these words? In a spiritual sense, when we think of garments, we think of character, don't we? The Scripture that comes to my mind is **Zechariah 3:4** where Joshua the high priest was wearing filthy garments and his sins were taken away and he was given a change of raiment. It's a fitting example of what the Lord will do for all of us if we're willing; willing to cast away our old sin-stained garments of character, and put on Christ's righteousness. And when we think of the word spotless we understand that it indicates purity. You put the two together and you have character purity. In **James 1:27** it says pure religion has to do with keeping oneself unspotted from the world. And in **Ephesians 5:27** Paul tells us God is looking for a church, "Without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."

And so, whatever "Keep your garments spotless" means, it very definitely does not mean being involved in sin of any kind, does it? No, but rather it means keeping sin out of our lives continually, which most professed Christians today think impossible or unnecessary since they believe Jesus did it all for them on the cross and all they have to do is believe. But this comforting, and yet deadly and false, doctrine is plainly exposed in the word of God as a plot of the devil. The problem is, people who believe they are in a saved condition while they have ongoing sin in their lives don't realize that they have fallen for the oldest trick in the devil's play book, but they could have known if they were students of the Word, couldn't they?

The great controversy, as far as our world is concerned, is based upon whether or not fallen human beings through the power of the Holy Spirit, can keep the Ten Commandments, or actually live without violating them, even though we have a sinful nature. We can't do anything about the fact that our natures are fallen, can we? We all have one and we'll carry it to the grave unless Jesus comes before that time, but we can choose not to do what it prompts us to do. Born again Christians can say no to temptation if they choose to. In fact, let me read you one of my favorite quotes from ***The Great Controversy, page 582***, because it tells us what the crux of the matter really is, and what it has always been.

"From the very beginning of the great controversy in heaven it has been Satan's purpose to overthrow the law of God. It was to accomplish this that he entered upon his rebellion against the Creator, and though he was cast out of heaven he has continued the same warfare upon the earth. . . The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle (**and believe me, it is a struggle**) of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God."

So, nothing new in the devil's bag of tricks, just in the way they're implemented, and he wants you to suffer the consequences of sin just like he's going to.

Now let's just think this through for a minute. It's a well known fact, for those who know their Bibles, that Satan and the angels he was able to deceive, were and are guilty of sin, that's why they were cast out of heaven, and if God were to allow people who rebel against Him, as Satan has done, into heaven without being submissive to divine authority, then Satan could accuse God of being unfair. He could say, "If you're going to let sinners into heaven, then you're going to have to let me in too, because they're no better than I am. You've said that the wages of sin is death, and if I have to die, so do all those who have been disloyal to Your government and to Your law." And you know what? He would have a valid point. God is not going to allow us into heaven any more than the devil if we don't stop transgressing His law. The devil remains a sinner to this day, and if we follow his example, how will the consequences for us be any different than they are for him?

Unless we come to the place in our lives where we would rather die than knowingly commit a wrong act, God cannot let us into a perfect heaven, because if He did, we would spoil it, it's just that simple. When we have this kind of heart conversion, that we would rather die than knowingly do wrong, and demonstrate before the unfallen universe that we are safe to save, God can then seal us into that mind set and we will retain it for all eternity, but if we are unwilling to be submissive to divine authority, or if we think we're going to sin until Jesus comes and yet be saved, we will be sealed in our sins and lose all hope of life everlasting and die in utter despair. Those are the two choices we have to choose from, and it seems like it would be easy to make the intelligent choice, but it's not as easy as one might think, because we have this sinful nature to contend with and it takes some effort on our part to continually choose the right and reject the wrong.

And so, if we choose to obey God we will have a life long struggle to war against the desires of the fallen flesh, and if we choose to rebel, we won't have near the struggle, I have to tell you, but we will pay dearly for it in the end. And so, here's what it boils down to, are you willing to fight the good fight of faith, or no? Are you willing to take up your cross daily and follow Jesus, or are you going to do what comes natural to the fallen flesh? And that would be sin.

Notice what it says in *Christ's Object Lessons, page 331*, "Christ has given us no assurance that to attain perfection of character is an easy matter. **(Have you already figured that out? It's not an easy matter to war against the flesh!)** A noble, all-round character is not inherited. It does not come to us by accident. A noble character is earned by individual effort through the merits and grace of Christ. God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character. It is formed by hard, stern battles with self. Conflict after conflict must be waged against hereditary tendencies. We shall have to criticize ourselves closely, and allow not one unfavorable trait to remain uncorrected."

You know, we see many shipwrecked lives all over the world today because of wrong choices, don't we? And it's no different as far as our salvation is concerned. How we choose to live is directly related to where we're going to end up. I don't know why that's so hard to understand. We can make shipwreck of our faith, or we can sail safely into the heavenly port, and it's all up to us. God provides everything necessary so we can be saved, but if we don't choose correctly, we'll have no one but ourselves to blame for our loss. Salvation is not a onetime choice as most Christians believe, but a daily choice to take up our cross and follow the example of the Lord.

The quote continues: "Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character. If you come to this decision, you will certainly fail of obtaining everlasting life. **(Now listen carefully, because now it gives the remedy for the problem)** The impossibility lies in your own will **(or your own choice)**. If you will not **(if you choose not)**, then you can not overcome. The real difficulty arises from the corruption of an unsanctified heart, and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God."

That was Satan's problem, and it remains his problem today, a corrupt heart and an unwillingness to submit, and it will be our problem as well unless we figure this out in time to make a course correction, and believe me, there's not much time left. For some odd reason many Christians today think that to use their own will is salvation by works, and so because of that they just continue to sin believing that their sins will be overlooked and forgiven as they go along, but nothing could be farther from the truth.

In **Romans 6:15, 16**, and in so many other places, the apostle Paul dispels this false notion by saying, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

The whole chapter would be good to read, but we don't have the time, but here's the thing, if you're finding it an impossibility to stop sinning, then it's clear what needs to happen; you need a heart transplant, and once that happens you will also receive a willingness to submit to God's control. That doesn't mean it's going to become easy to resist temptation all of a sudden, but it means you will now have an ability to choose that you didn't have before. You need to trade your unsanctified heart for a sanctified one, or a holy one. You need to allow Jesus to take away your filthy garments and give you a change of raiment, and this Jesus freely offers to everyone who is truly willing to receive it, and you need to do it without delay, because this life is our time of probation, and if we don't get it figured out while we're here, I have to tell you, we're not going to get another chance, and neither is Jesus going to wave a magic wand over us when He comes and gives us a righteous character as some believe. It is earned, as we read, "By hard, stern

battles with self.”

Let me read something else from *Testimonies For The Church, volume 2, page 355*, because I don't want you to think I'm just making all this up, or trying to make salvation unnecessarily difficult. *Testimonies 2, page 355*, “We believe without a doubt that Christ is soon coming.”

And I say amen to that, don't you? Without a doubt this world as we know it isn't going to last much longer. All you have to do is look at the current political climate in America, with all the corruption, and that the United States is soon to speak as a dragon as it has been prophesied to do in **Revelation 13:11**.

I don't say what I'm about to say to toot my own horn, because, believe me, I know full well that God is in control of His own work and not any man. I'm just thankful to have even a small part in taking the gospel to the world, and we all have this opportunity if we take it. Monthly sermon CDs from Gospel Workers Ministry are sent all over the world, and on the Internet people from over 150 countries have accessed material and downloaded sermons to listen to from our website so far this year. And so, those of you who may be listening in the various parts of Africa right now, or the Philippines, or the Asian countries, or in the Middle East, or Australia, or Canada, or Russia, or wherever else you may be; you need to understand that what happens in America affects the whole world, are you aware of that? So don't be thinking that your country is immune to what goes on in America.

You may have heard the saying, “When the United States sneezes, the world catches pneumonia”, well this analogy is true in a spiritual sense as well as politically and socially. Inspiration tells us plainly that the Sunday Law apostasy starts in the United States and then spreads to the whole world. Let me read you a couple short statements just in case you may be feeling a little smug about your own country not being affected by what happens in America.

Both statements are taken from *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 6, pages 18, 395* respectively. And really, you can get this same information by reading **Revelation 13** with understanding.

Page 18, “As America, the land of religious liberty, shall unite with the papacy in forcing the conscience and compelling men to honor the false sabbath, the people of every country on the globe will be led to follow her example.”

And page 395, “Foreign nations will follow the example of the United States. Though she leads out, yet the same crisis will come upon our people in all parts of the world.”

Sorry to have to tell you this, but there's going to be no place to hide as the great controversy draws to a close. All of us are going to be tested, and if we have not fortified our minds with the

word of God and prepared ourselves to give an answer to every man that asks about the hope that is within us, we will not be able to stand through the last great conflict. Yes, God has promised that He will not abandon His true followers as things intensify, but I have to tell you that it's coming to a town near you wherever you may live, and it's coming sooner than we think.

Now let me start over with the statement from *Testimonies, Volume 2, page 355* before I get too far off track. "We believe without a doubt that Christ is soon coming. This is not a fable to us; it is a reality. We have no doubt, neither have we had a doubt for years, that the doctrines we hold today (written in 1870) are present truth, and that we are nearing the judgment. **(And the word "today" is an important word, because some of the doctrines the church holds today are not the same as they were when this was written)** We are preparing to meet Him who, escorted by a retinue of holy angels, is to appear in the clouds of heaven to give the faithful and the just the finishing touch of immortality. When He comes He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects in our characters, or to cure us of the infirmities of our tempers and dispositions. If wrought for us at all, this work will all be accomplished before that time. When the Lord comes, those who are holy will be holy still. Those who have preserved their bodies and spirits in holiness, in sanctification and honor, will then receive the finishing touch of immortality. But those who are unjust, unsanctified, and filthy will remain so forever. No work will then be done for them to remove their defects and give them holy characters. The Refiner does not then sit to pursue His refining process and remove their sins and their corruption. This is all to be done in these hours of probation. It is now that this work is to be accomplished for us." And so, pretty clear, isn't it?

The phrase, "Keep your garments spotless" was first written in an article for public consumption in a paper called *The Day Star, March 14, 1846*, and comes from a letter written on **February 15** of the same year, which I'll read a short portion from in a few minutes. In fact, it's in three other places in the Spirit of Prophecy as well, but this is the first and oldest reference, and sometimes it's important to know that. This is one of the first visions Sister White had, in fact she was Ellen Harmon at the time, being unmarried at eighteen years of age, and about a year and a half after the disappointment of October 22, 1844.

Notice what she wrote. "I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. I gazed on Jesus' countenance and admired his lovely person. The Father's person I could not behold for a cloud of glorious light covered him. I asked Jesus if his Father had a form like himself; He said he had, but I could not behold it; for, said he, if you should for once see the glory of his person, you would cease to exist."

Poof, you're gone! You would vaporize like those who were on the ground when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

Now let me stop right there for a minute, because there's something extremely important here that we need to understand. The reason Jesus died in our place, and the reason we must have spotless garments and keep them that way, is so we can see God and live. That's what it's all about. **Hebrews 12:14** says without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Why? Because if we are unholy in God's presence we would cease to exist! If we don't keep our garments spotless we have no chance of surviving in the immediate presence of God, None! We would just cease to exist. That's what's going to happen to those who refuse the offer of salvation that has been purchased at such an infinite cost. That's also why **2 Thessalonians 2:8** says the wicked are going to be destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming. They can't survive as long as they have sin in their lives. Jesus doesn't want that to happen to you, and that's why He had to sacrifice His life upon the cross.

Hebrews 12:29 says, "Our God is a consuming fire", and commenting on this verse, ***The Desire of Ages, page 107*** says, "In all who submit to His power the Spirit of God will consume sin. But if men cling to sin, they become identified with it. Then the glory of God, which destroys sin, must destroy them."

And so dear friends, Jesus took our sins upon Himself and died the death that we deserve that we might be able to endure the divine presence and not be destroyed, and there was no other way for this to be accomplished except for Jesus to sacrifice His own life so we could enjoy eternity with Him, and the Father, and the Holy Spirit, and the holy angels, and unfallen worlds, and not be consumed. And so, I hope we all understand that this was done for our eternal happiness, but again, it's a choice. Just like Caleb who said to the Israelite's, we are well able to go up and possess the promised land; so we, if we will simply do what God says rather than try to run our own lives without divine help, will also inherit the heavenly Canaan.

The quote from ***The Day Star*** goes on, "Before the throne was the Advent people, the Church, and the world."

Now it's very important to see that she saw three groups here, not just two. "The Advent people, the church, and the world." According to this the Advent people are not the church and the church is not the Advent people. What does that mean? It means that just because we claim to be part of the Advent people does not mean we are also part of the church. If you go on to read the whole article, you'll find that the only group of the three that followed Jesus by faith from the Holy to the Most Holy place of the heavenly sanctuary after the disappointment on October 22, 1844 is the church. How do we know that? Because ***Upward Look 315*** tells us clearly that the church is made up of those who love God and keep His commandments that are in the Most Holy Place, and that's also the way they kept their garments spotless.

One of the groups mentioned is the world, and the world is not part of the church, never has

been, never will be. Neither were those of the Advent people who did not receive the light part of the church, and neither were some who were part of the church at first, but ended up resisting the light. You see, the church is a very special group of people; they're made up of those who have been called out from the other two groups; called out from the world and from those who only profess to be a part of the church but have not corresponding works.

The quote continues, "I saw a company **(the church)** bowed down before the throne, deeply interested while most of them **(the Advent people and the world)** stood up disinterested and careless. Those who were bowed before the throne would offer up their prayers and look to Jesus, then he would look to his Father and appeared to be pleading with him. Then a light came from the Father to his Son and from him to the praying company. Then I saw an exceeding bright light come from the Father to the Son and from the Son it waved over the people before the throne **(that would be the other two groups as well. They all had a chance to receive the light)**. But few would receive this great light. Many came out from under it and immediately resisted it. Others were careless and did not cherish the light and it moved off from them. Some cherished it and went and bowed down before the throne with the little praying company. **(And so we see some movement here as people were making up their minds about whether or not to receive the light and join the church)** This company **(this little praying company, the church)** all received the light, and rejoiced in it as their countenances shone with its glory. Then I saw the Father rise from the throne and in a flaming chariot go into the Holy of Holies within the veil, and did sit. . . Then Jesus rose up from the throne **(He was still in the Holy Place)**, and most of those who were bowed down rose up with him. And I did not see one ray of light pass from Jesus to the careless multitude after he rose up, and they were left in perfect darkness. Those who rose up when Jesus did, kept their eyes fixed on him as he left the throne, and led them out a little way **(where did He lead them? He led them away from the worldly people and Advent people who rejected the light)**, then he raised his right arm and we heard his lovely voice saying, wait ye, I am going to my Father **(who is now in the Most Holy Place)** to receive the Kingdom. Keep your garments spotless and in a little while I will return from the wedding, and receive you to myself. And I saw a cloudy chariot with wheels like flaming fire. Angels were all about the chariot as it came where Jesus was; he stepped into it and was borne to the Holiest where the Father sat. **(Now Jesus and the Father are in the Most Holy Place together, and this happened at the close of the 2300 year prophecy in Daniel 8:14 on October 22, 1844)**. . . I saw those who rose up with Jesus send up their faith to Jesus in the Holiest, and praying, Father give us thy spirit. Then Jesus would breathe on them the Holy Ghost. In the breath was light, power and much love, joy and peace."

So here we see that the church was separated from the world and from the nominal Advent people and told to remain separated and spotless until Jesus would return to the earth. And what happen to the Advent people and the world who now essentially composed one company?

The article goes on to say, "Then I turned to look at the company who were still bowed before the throne **(that is, in the holy place, because they didn't go with the praying company that were led out a little way)**. They did not know that Jesus had left it. Satan appeared to be by the throne trying to carry on the work of God. **(So after God vacated the Holy Place, Satan jumped right in to take His place)** I saw them **(the advent people and the world, which are essentially one group now)** look up to the throne and pray, My Father give us thy spirit. Then Satan would breathe on them an unholy influence. In it there was light and much power, but no sweet love, joy and peace. Satan's object was to keep them deceived and to draw back and deceive God's children" **(Or the church that had been led out a little way)**.

You see, Satan wasn't so concerned about the group that was still bowed down in the holy place, because he already had them buffaloed, now his attention was turned toward those that had separated from them, as Jesus directed them to do, in order to draw them back into the company of the world and the nominal Advent people to the place that Jesus had left.

"I saw one after another leave the company who were praying to Jesus in the Holiest **(that company that had been led out a little way)**, go and join those before the throne **(in the Holy Place)** and they at once received the unholy influence of Satan."

Now that's scary! Because we're not just talking about something that happened around the time of the great disappointment, but something that applies to us today as well, and I'll be giving you evidence of this as we go along.

The light that came to the three groups that was resisted and rejected by the majority and accepted by the minority, is the three angels' messages, and especially the third, which takes us down to the close of probationary time; in fact the third angel's message is elsewhere called the binding off message, and once you bind something off it's done, it's closed. And so this vision we've been reading about is present truth for us today. We have the same truth and are going through the same experience today as they did over a hundred years ago. The messages and the experience of understanding and accepting them, is no different today than it was when they were first given, and we'll be reading about that in a little while.

If you do a search in the Spirit of Prophecy you'll find that there are many many statements that tell us plainly that history is being, and will be repeated once again during the final events of the great controversy, and we're drawing very close to that time today.

Here's one such statement from *Manuscript Releases, Volume 13, page 380, January 20, 1904*, "Bear this in mind. History is being repeated. The perils that God's people encountered in past ages, they will encounter again, intensified."

So not only is history being repeated, but it will become even more intense than it has ever been

in the past as we near the end, and now is the time to prepare ourselves for it.

But here's the really sad part of the vision we've been discussing. Satan was very successful in convincing many, and I would say most, because she said she saw "One after another" go back and rejoin the group they had left. And in *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5, page 209* they are called "A little company" and not the majority. To me that indicates that there were more that left than stayed in the separated church group. "One after another" went back into the world or into a worldly church, and is that not exactly what we have witnessed over the past 20-30 years especially?

If you see yourself, and the things you've experienced in this vision, as I do, you should understand that Jesus led you out "A little way" so you could "Keep your garments spotless." This cannot be accomplished if you go back, period! Because what happened to those that went back? "They at once received the unholy influence of Satan", and it's absolutely impossible to be in that kind of atmosphere and retain a spotless character.

Let me read you a couple statements that would show this to be absolutely true. *Review and Herald, February 26, 1995*, "The world must not be introduced into the church and married to the church. Through union with the world the church will become corrupt,—'a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.' **(And that's a description of Babylon from Revelation 18:2)** The customs of the world must not have a place; for they will be open doors through which the prince of darkness will find access, and the line of demarkation will become indistinguishable between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."

And also *Review and Herald, January 2, 1900*, "God and Christ and the heavenly host would have man know that if he unites with the corrupt, he will become corrupt."

That's exactly what happened to those that Satan was successful in drawing back, and it didn't take a long time for it to happen, because it says they at once, **(or immediately)** received "The unholy influence of Satan." They may continue on in their round of ceremonies and seem to be very religious and have an air of piety about them, and even meet together on the seventh-day Sabbath, but nonetheless they have been breathed upon by Satan, which means they are not safe to worship with.

They still have much light and power, as we read, but they have no sweet love, joy, and peace in their hearts like the little praying company because they have grieved the Holy Spirit. They take the much light and power they still have and use it to help Satan in his effort to draw back and deceive God's true children who are sending up their prayers and faith to the Most Holy Place. They call it reclaiming the poor souls the devil has deceived, but they are themselves deceived, and yet they are in a large measure successful.

This vision we've been reading about has a direct correlation to the open and shut door mentioned in **Revelation 3:7, 8** and the experience the pioneers of our faith went through during the time of the great disappointment in 1844. There was a door opened to the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary and a shut door to the Holy Place. This is the same as when angels, in a cloudy chariot with wheels like flaming fire, carried Jesus from one apartment to the other.

When Jesus left the Holy Place, the door of salvation was shut in that apartment because Jesus was no longer there. And who was it that was trying to carry on the work there? Satan. He had taken over that vacated position in order to deceive those who didn't follow Jesus by faith into the Most Holy Place and also those who did leave, but ended up going back. And what was the special truth that was revealed when the door to the Most Holy was opened? The Sabbath of the fourth commandment. It was seen that the tablets of stone that were inscribed with the finger of God was the same as when given to Moses, and the Sabbath commandment had a halo of light around it drawing special attention to the fact that there was no Bible proof or sanctity for Sunday, the first day of the week as a holy day to be observed by God's people. And is this not present truth for us today? Of course it is! Implying once again that this experience has a repeating application for us as well.

There's yet another example I'd like to look at to show that we are today included in this vision, just as much as those who lived through it initially. It's found in ***Spiritual Gifts, Volume 1, page 166*** and also ***Early Writings, page 256***, where it says, "Many who embraced the third message had not had an experience in the two former messages. Satan understood this, and his evil eye was upon them to overthrow them (**or to draw them back**); but the third angel was pointing them to the most holy place, and those who had had an experience in the past messages were pointing them the way to the heavenly sanctuary. Many saw the perfect chain of truth in the angels' messages, and gladly received them in their order, and followed Jesus by faith into the heavenly sanctuary. These messages were represented to me as an anchor to the people of God. Those who understand and receive them will be kept from being swept away by the many delusions of Satan."

And don't you think that the three angels' messages are still as an anchor to us today, and that an understanding of these messages will keep us from being swept away by the many delusions of Satan and drawn back into the company that were careless and indifferent? The three angels' messages are inseparably linked to the sanctuary, and unless we follow Jesus by faith all the way through the sanctuary and into the Most Holy Place where Jesus ministers in our behalf today, we will not remain anchored or settled into the truth so we can't be moved.

And yes, we need the experience that comes from an understanding of how the courtyard and the Holy Place relates to our salvation, but without completing our journey into the Most Holy

Place where the Ten Commandments are kept, and power is given to keep them, we will not receive the finishing touch of immortality when Jesus comes, because without heart obedience to those commandments we will not be able to form a righteous character and be able to keep our garments spotless as we've been told to do.

The Holy Spirit must lead us all the way into the Most Holy Place and empower us to stay there by faith, which will be made manifest by continual obedience to the Law, or we will be drawn back to the place that Jesus has left and be deceived by the father of lies. If all we have is a courtyard/Holy Place experience, we will continue to go round and round without having victory over sin; we'll be sinning and repenting, sinning and repenting, sinning and repenting like the nominal Advent people and the worldly churches are doing, but never satisfy the claims of the law by abiding in Christ where He is, and where He's been since October 22, 1844, and where He will be until His work as our High Priest is finished and human probation closes.

Now, you might be wondering how an understanding of the sanctuary message and the three angels' messages correspond to each other, or how they tie together, and that's a good question, and we'll go over it just briefly this morning and maybe more thoroughly another time.

First of all there are three areas in the sanctuary; the courtyard, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place, and there are also three angels' messages that are represented by the three divisions of the sanctuary.

The first angel's message of **Revelation 14:6, 7** has to do with the everlasting gospel to all the world, the beginning of the investigative judgment, and calling people back to the worship of the Creator. In other words, it's the Good News about the sacrifice of Christ and the forgiveness that comes from accepting Him as our Savior. Why these two points? Because there are only two articles in the courtyard; the altar of sacrifice and the laver. The altar represents not only the sacrifice of Christ in our behalf, but it also represents our own sacrificing of self as an act of love for what Jesus has done for us, and the laver is where the cleansing, or the washing away of sin takes place before we can move on to the Holy Place. And so the courtyard and the first angel's message is the beginning of our walk with the Lord, or our justification, but there's more to salvation than accepting Christ—our Creator, and receiving the forgiveness of sins. We have to move on to the Holy Place in order to begin the sanctification process.

In the Holy Place there are three articles; the lamp stand, the table of show bread, and the altar of incense. The table of show bread represents Jesus, the bread of life, the word of God; the lamp stand represents the light that comes as the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual understanding of that word; and the altar of incense is where our prayers ascend to the throne of God where the Father and the Son are in the Most Holy Place.

Now, nearly all Christian churches teach that it's a good thing to study the Bible, to ask for the Holy Spirit, and to intercede for others in prayer; all the Babylonian churches agree that we should do this, but if we stop there, which they all do, then they are missing the last and most important part of the way through the sanctuary, which is the way of salvation. That's why, in the second angel's message there is a call to come out of Babylonian confusion, because it's only a partial message that will leave you guilty of sin and in a vicious cycle of sinning and repenting as you continue to transgress the law, which is in the Most Holy Place. **Psalm 77:13** says, "Thy way oh God, is in the sanctuary", it's the way of salvation, but if we don't make it past the Holy Place, we will be deceived by the devil who is trying to carry on a work there of convincing Christians they don't need to keep the Ten Commandment Law to be saved. All they have to do is believe. But remember what **James 2:19** says, "The devils also believe and tremble", and their belief is not going to save them, and neither will it save us unless we have corresponding works.

That's where the third angel's message comes in, because it says, "Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus", and all those who don't will receive the "Mark of the beast", it's very plain. And make no mistake friends, those that allow themselves to be drawn back into the Holy Place with the nominal Advent people and the world will end up giving in to the pressure to bow to Sunday, the idol sabbath set up by the papacy and apostate Protestantism, when it's enforced by civil law.

And so, what's the bottom line? Here it is. Victory can only come as we follow the three angels' messages "In their order" through the sanctuary, finishing our course in the Most Holy Place. This is where we need to be when our probation closes, whether at death or when Jesus comes if we are fortunate enough to be alive and translated without seeing death, but either way we need this victory in order to meet Jesus in peace.

In **Revelation 16:15** Jesus says, "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments (**spotless that is**), lest he walk naked (**without the righteousness of Christ**), and they see his shame."

Cindy and I have been reading through the devotional **Maranatha** each morning, and a few days ago, on **page 298**, it says something I'd like to close with this morning. "This is our washing and ironing time—the time when we are to cleanse our robes of character in the blood of the Lamb. John says, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world'.... Shall we not let our sins go?"

"I entreat you, brethren and sisters, to labor earnestly to secure the crown of everlasting life. The reward will be worth the conflict, worth the effort. . . . In the race in which we are running, everyone may receive the reward offered—a crown of everlasting life. I want this crown; I mean by God's help to have it. I mean to hold fast to the truth, that I may see the King in His beauty."

That's what I want, don't you? Friends, Jesus led us out a little way away and said, "Wait ye, I am going to my Father to receive the Kingdom. Keep your garments spotless and in a little while I will return from the wedding, and receive you to myself." And if we will just do as He has said, and stay in the place where He has led us, we will receive that crown, that's His promise.

Don't allow yourself to be drawn back because you're lonely for fellowship, or you think you have the responsibility to reach those that are still in the Holy Place experience, it won't work, Jesus is not there! Rather than rescuing them, you will be breathed on by an unholy influence. You can deal with them outside of their nominal church if you have the opportunity to do so, but don't go to worship with them, because you'll be going to a place that Jesus has left, and that's always dangerous. I will concede that there might be a time or occasion to go back if God sends you there, maybe for a funeral or a wedding, but you better make sure it's God that's talking to you and telling you to go.

I know I said I was going to close with the last reading from *Maranatha*, but I feel compelled to remind you of one more inspired statement from *Early Writings, pages 124, 125*, because it goes right along with the vision we've been talking about for the last hour; it will just take a minute. "I was shown the necessity of those who believe that we are having the last message of mercy, being separate from those who are daily imbibing new errors. I saw that neither young nor old should attend their meetings; for it is wrong to thus encourage them while they teach error that is a deadly poison to the soul and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. The influence of such gatherings is not good. If God has delivered us from such darkness and error **(or we could say, if He has led us out a little way and said stay here)**, we should stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has set us free and rejoice in the truth. God is displeased with us when we go to listen to error, without being obliged to go; for unless He sends us to those meetings **(that is, in the Holy Place)** where error is forced home to the people by the power of the will, He will not keep us. The angels cease their watchful care over us, and we are left to the buffetings of the enemy, to be darkened and weakened by him and the power of his evil angels; and the light around us becomes contaminated with the darkness."