

Revelation 17:1-4—The history, future and fall of mystery Babylon, the false religious system that started with Nimrod and the Tower of Babel—Part 1

Revision of Chapter 16

Last week in Revelation 16 we studied the last set of judgements that God will pour out on the earth—the seven bowl judgements. They will bring absolute devastation and destruction to the earth.

- First Bowl - Loathsome and painful Sores for those who have taken the mark of the beast.
- Second Bowl - All the oceans turn to blood and every living thing in the oceans die.
- Third Bowl - The rivers and streams turn to blood.
- Fourth Bowl - Sun scorches the earth.
- Fifth Bowl - Darkness and Pain on the Kingdom of the Antichrist.
- Sixth Bowl - Euphrates Dried Up to prepare the way for the kings of the east.
- Seventh Bowl - Massive Earthquake and ~40kg hail stones.

Remember that the end of Revelation chapter 16 brings us right to the end of the 7 year Tribulation—the second coming of Jesus is imminent. The armies of the world are gathering in Israel, and all that is left is for Jesus to come back and wipe them all out. He then regenerates the earth, sets up His kingdom, and reigns over all the earth for 1,000 years.

But now in Revelation chapters 17 and 18 we have an explanation of the one-world religious system and the one-world economic system respectively that the antichrist will use to gain control over the whole world. These two chapters outline the history, future and end of these two evil entities. Today in Revelation chapter 17 we will start to see the origin, future, and end of the mystery Babylon religious system. This is like a flash back that shows us why these awful things will happen to the people “who dwell on the earth,” the unbelievers.

Revelation 17:1-18—The history, future and fall of mystery Babylon

We'll start by reading through the whole chapter so we can get the big picture.

Revelation 17:1-18 NKJV

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls (golden censers) came and talked with me, saying to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, ² with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication (spiritual adultery), and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

³ So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns (the 10 horns are on the last of the 7 heads and represent the last days one-world kingdom or government that will be ruled by the

antichrist). ⁴ The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication (immorality).

⁵ And on her forehead a name was written:

MYSTERY,

BABYLON THE GREAT,

THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH

⁶ I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs (witnesses) of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marvelled (wondered) with great amazement.

The Meaning of the Woman and the Beast

⁷ But the angel said to me, “Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. ⁸ The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is (will come).

⁹ “Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. ¹⁰ There are also seven kings (kingdoms). Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. ¹¹ The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition (lit. leads to destruction).

¹² “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast (they reign with the antichrist during the 7 year tribulation). ¹³ These are of one mind (or purpose), and they will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him (the raptured church) are called, chosen, and faithful.”

¹⁵ Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. ¹⁶ And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. ¹⁷ For God has put it into their hearts to fulfil (execute) His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. ¹⁸ And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns (is reigning) over the kings of the earth.”

Scripture Interprets Scripture—how to interpret chapter 17

Notice in verse 9 that the angel says to John, “Here is the mind which has wisdom:” This is the plot point. This is where the angel is saying that he would explain the meaning of all the symbols used in the first half of the chapter.

You see, the book of Revelation is not that hard to understand. It’s just a matter of looking through the rest of the bible to find the symbol and find its literal meaning. Here in Revelation chapter 17, the second half of the chapter explains the signs and symbols

used in the first half of the chapter. A lot of the time the book of revelation explains itself. And if the figures of speech or symbols are not explained in the immediate context, they will be explained somewhere else in the bible. Just get a concordance and start going through and tracking these words, and the bible itself will explain the symbols. The Holy Spirit used John to write this book in such a way that the bible would be its own encyclopaedia for it. The bible itself is the encyclopaedia for the book of Revelation. There are two major items in this chapter that are explained—the harlot and the beast, the two main driving forces in this chapter.

The concept of Babylon in Scripture

Before we start the chapter, it think that it's important that we look at the history of Babylon and what it came to represent in the bible. Here are some interesting facts:

1. Revelation 16:19 and 14:8 have already declared or proclaimed Babylon's fall. In Revelation 17 and 18, the fall or destruction of Babylon is carefully detailed or explained.
2. Babylon is mentioned 287 times in the Scriptures, more than any other city except Jerusalem.
3. Babylon was a literal city on the Euphrates River. Genesis 11:1–10 shows that right after the flood, Babylon "was the seat of the civilisation that expressed organised hostility to God." (Tenney)
4. Babylon was later the capital of the empire that cruelly conquered Judah.
5. To those familiar with the Old Testament, the name *Babylon* is associated with organised idolatry, blasphemy and the persecution of God's people.
6. "In John's day Rome epitomised all the antagonism and opposition to the Christian faith." (Mounce) In some ways, the city of Rome during the time of the Roman empire, and in the centuries following, was the clearest fulfilment of the Babylon Mystery religious and economic systems.
7. The concept of Babylon is greater than Revelation 17–18 and the Antichrist's reign. Babylon was present in John's day (typified by Rome), in our day, and throughout history, as the *world system*. But under the Antichrist, Babylon (in both its religious and commercial aspects) will have even greater influence over the earth, and will most likely have its headquarters in Rome.

Revelation 17—The Rise and Fall of Religious Babylon

The great harlot (religious Babylon) is described (v 1-6)

Revelation 17:1-2 NKJV

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, ² with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

v 1 **"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me,..."** This links this to chapter 16. One of the angels who had a golden censer or bowl talks to John.

v 1 **I will show you the judgment of the great harlot:** Her **judgment** is assured at the outset. There is never any doubt regarding the fate—and ultimate failure—of Babylon. This is the same for anyone who does not repent. All sin will be punished. The only way to escape God's wrath is to receive a pardon from God, the forgiveness of your sins.

Here's a quote from David Guzik that describes the origins of this Mystery Babylon religion:

*“Also, as a religious system, Babylon came into being long before Christianity, but in Satanic imitation it anticipated the coming true Messiah. According to religious history and legend, the Babylonian religion was founded by the wife of Nimrod (a great-grandson of Noah), named Semiramis. She was a high priestess of idol worship, and she gave birth to a son who she claimed was **conceived miraculously**. The son, named **Tammuz, was considered a saviour**. Many ancient artefacts remain with the familiar motif of the mother Semiramis holding the saviour-infant Tammuz, which predate Christianity. It was also said that Tammuz was killed by a wild beast and then **miraculously brought back to life**.”*

Interestingly, Baal was the local, Canaanite name for the Babylonian Tammuz, showing that the ancient cultures actively participated in this false religion, this Mystery Babylon. The Bible makes specific mention of some of the features of the religion of mystery Babylon:

- Ezekiel protests against the ceremony of weeping for Tammuz (Ezekiel 8:14)
- Jeremiah mentions the heathen practice of making cakes for the queen of heaven (Semiramis, see Jeremiah 7:18) and offering incense to the queen of heaven (Jeremiah 44:17–19, 44:25)

Today our easter celebrations are based on this mystery religion. Like Christmas, easter was a pagan festival linked to the Mystery Babylon religion, but was “christianised” around the time when christianity became the state religion of the Roman empire in 323AD. The truth is that the forty days of Lent, eggs, rabbits, hot cross buns and the Easter ham have everything to do with the ancient pagan religion of Mystery Babylon. For example, Semiramis became known as "Ishtar" which is pronounced "Easter", and her moon egg became known as "Ishtar's" egg." You can search these things out for yourselves.

Here is one of the references that I googled. I can't vouch for its accuracy.

<http://www.lasttrumpetministries.org/tracts/tract1.html>

My point here isn't to say that we shouldn't celebrate easter, or that we should ban easter eggs. Rather, I just wanted to show just how widespread the Mystery Babylon Religion was in those early centuries, and how it had continued on for around 2,800 years, and still continues on today in its various forms.

v 1 **Who sits on many waters:** Revelation 17:15 explains that **many waters** means many nations.

Revelation 17:15 NKJV

Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.

What this means is that during the first half of the seven year tribulation Mystery Babylon will take the form of a truly one-world religion.

Quotes concerning this future one world religion:

David Guzik: *This is unification of all false, idolatrous religion, with representatives from apostate Catholicism, Protestantism, as well as a smorgasbord of other religions of the world.*

David Hocking: *“The woman pictures false religion that will dominate the world in the tribulation period.”*

David Guzik: *Many people like to identify this great harlot with the Roman Catholic Church, but false religion is not limited to any one church.*

v 2 **The inhabitants of the earth were made drunk:** Religious Babylon, this false, satanic religion causes all people to become intoxicated or drunk, so to speak. When a person is drunk, they lose their discernment and common sense—they do things that are both wrong (e.g. getting pregnant out of wedlock) and dangerous (e.g. drink driving). Their lack of discernment means that they no longer have any understanding of wrong or right. Their lack of common sense means that they lose any sense of danger. So what this means is that “those who dwell on the earth,” the unbelievers, will have had their conscience seared and will carry on in their sin, oblivious, blind to, and uncaring about the coming eternal judgement that they will soon face—eternity in the Lake of Fire.

v 2 **Made drunk with the wine of her fornication:** The idea of **fornication (sexual immorality or adultery)** often has strong associations throughout the Bible with *idolatry*, idolatry being the worship of idols and the demons they represent. This is described in the Old Testament as “religious prostitution”.

Hosea 9:1 NLT paraphrase

O people of Israel, do not rejoice as other nations do.

For you have been unfaithful to your God,
hiring yourselves out like prostitutes,

worshiping other gods on every threshing floor.

Notice what it says, **“For you have been unfaithful to your God, hiring yourselves out like prostitutes, worshiping other gods on every threshing floor.”** Basically, Israel was unfaithful to their covenant promise to God, the promise they made at Mt Sinai to worship only the true God, Yahweh. The idea is that worshipping any other god than the true God, Yahweh or Jehovah, is like spiritual prostitution. The other false religions are described as harlots or prostitutes, and those who follow them or partake of them are described as committing prostitution or playing the prostitute .

Hosea also tells us of the behaviour that goes along with false religion:

Hosea 4:10b-15 NLT paraphrase

They will play the prostitute and gain nothing from it, for they have deserted the Lord ¹¹ to worship other gods.

“Wine has robbed my people of their understanding.

¹² They ask a piece of wood for advice!

They think a stick can tell them the future!

Longing after idols has made them foolish.

They have played the prostitute, serving other gods and deserting their God.

¹³ They offer sacrifices to idols on the mountaintops.

They go up into the hills to burn incense in the pleasant shade of oaks, poplars, and terebinth trees.

“That is why your daughters turn to prostitution, and your daughters-in-law commit adultery.

¹⁴ But why should I punish them for their prostitution and adultery?

For your men are doing the same thing, sinning with whores and shrine prostitutes.

O foolish people! You refuse to understand, so you will be destroyed.

¹⁵ “Though you, Israel, are a prostitute, may Judah not be guilty of such things.

Do not join the false worship at Gilgal or Beth-aven, and do not take oaths there in the Lord’s name.

Also see Jeremiah 3:6, Ezekiel 23:19. There are many others. In every case it is referring to turning away from the truth of God, the true worship of God, and turning to false religion.

The verses in Hosea 4 make it very easy to see why Israel so easily fell into idolatry—it was very appealing to their sinful nature. They could get drunk, they could have orgies, they could have regular sex with the temple prostitutes—what a great life—*not!* We know better. But that’s the kind of lifestyle the unbeliever wants. All this world wants and craves is to be able to do whatever brings them the most pleasure.

But it wasn’t just Israel who did this. Let’s look up:

Naham 3:4 NLT paraphrase

All this because Nineveh,
the beautiful and faithless city,
mistress of deadly charms,
enticed the nations with her beauty.
She taught them all her magic,
enchanting people everywhere.

Miss Scarlet O’harlot here is a picture of Mystery Babylon. It brings in the fact that this religious prostitution brings with it sorcery and witchcraft—demons. This false religious system will be energised by demons, as it has been in history. But it will come to a huge climax during the first half of the 7 year tribulation. Demons will be actively involved in deceiving people into being involved in and joined to this one-world religious system. Listen to Psalm 106:36-39 as it describes what the children of Israel did as they worshipped the false god Baal (Tammuz):

Psalm 106:36-39 NLT paraphrase

³⁶ They worshiped their idols,
which led to their downfall.

³⁷ They even sacrificed their sons
and their daughters to the demons.

³⁸ They shed innocent blood,
the blood of their sons and daughters.

By sacrificing them to the idols of Canaan,
they polluted the land with murder.

³⁹ They defiled themselves by their evil deeds,
and their love of idols was adultery in the Lord’s sight.

Behind idols are always demons. These verses bring it out clearly that idol worship is really demon worship. Here is another one:

Leviticus 17:7 NLT paraphrase

The people must no longer be unfaithful to the Lord by offering sacrifices to the goat idols [literally demons]. This is a permanent law for them, to be observed from generation to generation.

This command was given when the children of Israel were still in the wilderness, they hadn't even gotten into the promised land. This is what they did in Egypt!

Mystery Babylon, in its final form in during the first half of the Tribulation, will be a well-accepted and classy looking one-world religious system—but in God's eyes it will be a prostitute, a low class whore. As we will learn soon in the coming verses, it will appear as attractive and spiritual, but will no doubt be very immoral and accepting of all kinds of aberrant sexual behaviour and anything else that appeals to our fleshly appetites and sinful nature. It will probably have a lot to do with worshiping the environment. This is why it will be easily accepted by the people who dwell on the earth, the unbelievers, those who reject the truth and are deceived. It will be no different to the children of Israel seeking to have their physical appetites fulfilled as they engaged in the worship of these false gods, the false religious system.

Remember what Revelation 9:20-21 says about the people caught up in the Mystery Babylon false religious system during the time of the 7 year Tribulation:

Revelation 9:20-21 NKJV

But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. ²¹ And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Today, our culture increasingly worships these same idols: sex, money, sorcery (drugs and witchcraft) and thefts. Again, the reason the Mystery Babylon religion will be so readily accepted is that it will appeal to our sinful nature. This is also the reason that it will be so difficult to be a tribulation believer in those times. We think it's hard now, but it's nothing like it will be—immorality and sin will be strongly promoted and mandated by this one-world false religious system. It will be powerful and persuasive, and there will be a great price to pay for refusing to follow the crowd. So what will it be like to be a believer in the tribulation? Well, verse 6 tells us that this woman, this Mystery Babylon false religion, is drunk with the blood of the saints. What this means is that even before the antichrist starts his program or campaign to annihilate the tribulation believers at the halfway point, 3 1/2 years into the 7 year tribulation, this false religion, this Mystery Babylon one-world religion will already be responsible for the death of many tribulation saints or believers (See Revelation 6:9-11).

What John saw (Revelation 17:3–6)

Revelation 17:3-5 NKJV

So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.

⁵ And on her forehead a name was written:

MYSTERY,

BABYLON THE GREAT,

THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH

v 3 **So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness.** **Wilderness** here means a desolate, lonely, deserted place. This is interesting. Why did the Spirit have to carry John away into the wilderness to see this sign? Because this system of idolatry and false religion had turned the world into a metaphoric jungle, a wilderness. God created people to be in relationship with Him. But sin isolates us both from God and from each other. True unity, true fellowship, true love, can only be found in Christ, when people are saved and are walking or living by the power of the Spirit. The rest of the world will never understand what it means to experience true fellowship, true love, to be in relationship with the true God, the Creator of Heaven and earth.

v 3 **And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns...** This is the same woman described at the end of the chapter in verse 18. But she is also described as a great whore in verse 5.

Here we see the harlot or woman or prostitute riding or on top of the same beast (**seven heads and ten horns**) that was previously seen in Revelation 13:1—the Antichrist and his one-world government. This tells us a lot about the relationship between the economic Babylon and the religious Babylon.

Quote from Walvoord:

“Her position, that of riding the beast, indicates on the one hand that she is supported by the political power of the beast, and on the other that she is in a dominant role and at least outwardly controls and directs the beast.” (Walvoord)

Think of someone riding a horse. It's the person riding who is guiding the horse. But at the same time the horse is supporting and enabling the rider to go where they want to go. These two Mystery Babylon systems, religious and economic/political need each other and use each other. But as we read at the end of the chapter, the beast, the antichrist and his political and economic world empire or kingdom or government, will turn on the woman and destroy her brutally at the half way mark of the Tribulation.

In other words, the antichrist will use the woman, the prostitute, the false one-world religion to get what he wants—to achieve total control of all the world. But once the antichrist gets what he wants, and doesn't need her any more, he destroys the entire system of false religion. This will happen around the halfway point, 3 1/2 years into the tribulation. He and the 10 kings who support him (the 10 horns) will turn on this prostitute.

Revelation 17:16-17 NKJV

And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. ¹⁷ For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.

In place of this Mystery Babylon one-world false religion, he demands that the whole world worship him, especially after he is assassinated and is resurrected from the dead. He will demand that people take his mark and worship his statue. The one-world ecumenical religion called MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH, will not longer be required. Instead, the antichrist will demand to be worshipped as God as we have studied in Revelation 13. Satan will not share his glory.

Back to verse 3 of Revelation chapter 17.

v 3 **And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy:** The beast or world empire controlled by the antichrist is described as being clothed in scarlet and being full of names of blasphemy, that is, blasphemy against God. This shows that the economic and political world system (economic Mystery Babylon) will have been impermeated or polluted or influenced by the religious system (religious Mystery Babylon). It will be evil and anti-God at its core.

An application here is that from God's perspective both the woman (religious Mystery Babylon) and the beast (the antichrist and his world empire) are seen as full of blasphemy from God's perspective. But to the people of the earth she will look quite religious, and have the "faith" everybody wants. It's like the four world empires described in Daniel. From a human point of view they were described as a magnificent statue with a head of gold. But, from God's point of view, these same kingdoms were just disgusting beasts. It's so important that we be in the word of God so we can discern true religion from false religion. Why? Because as we see in verse 4, the woman, this one-world false religion, looked good and was appealing. It would appear to be truly spiritual and real.

v 4 **The woman was arrayed:** The woman is clothed with emblems of luxury (**purple ... gold and precious stones**) and government (**scarlet**). Yet her golden cup is full of idolatry (**abominations**) and impurity (**filthiness of her fornication or sexual immorality**). Basically what this means is that she would look good on the outside, but be full of evil on the inside.

"Abominations" refers to more than regular sin. It means that it is especially offensive to God. It is something that God will particularly judge. E.g. homosexuality. Homosexuality is called an abomination in many places in the bible.

Application:

This looking good on the outside but being vile on the inside reminds me of what Jesus said to the pharisees who were also caught up in empty religion:

Matthew 23:27-28 NLT paraphrase

"What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. ²⁸ Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Like the Mystery Babylon one-world ecumenical religion, the empty legalism or religion of the pharisees looked good on the outside. They were rich and successful appeared blessed by God. They appeared to be good people. They appeared to be seeking God. They appeared to be following the bible. They appeared to be honourable people. They had a lot of political power. But what did Jesus say about them? They were whitewashed tombs, full of dead mens bones—i.e. no life, no relationship with God, just empty religion. No wonder Jesus had such harsh words for them.

This brings us to a very important application for the church today. This empty religion doesn't just spring up overnight. It's already started. It's becoming more and more prevalent. Many in the church left behind after the rapture, due to poor bible teaching, won't even believe in the rapture and will fit right into this empty religion, which has a facade of spirituality, but is really anti-god. The Mystery Babylon one-world religion won't be much different to what they experienced in their empty religion churches before the rapture. We need to have spiritual discernment to know the true from the false. Paul warned Timothy that in the last days there would be some specific signs of the times.

2 Timothy 3:1-5,8-9 NLT paraphrase

You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. ² For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. ³ They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. ⁴ They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God.

⁵ **They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!**

⁸ **These teachers oppose the truth** just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses. They have depraved minds and a counterfeit faith. ⁹ But they won't get away with this for long. Someday everyone will recognise what fools they are, just as with Jannes and Jambres.

What's important here is that, firstly, despite their evil and wicked lifestyle, they will still **act religious**. They will act religious by going to church services and keeping some rituals, but will not be godly. Paul commands us to "stay away from people like that!"

Secondly it says that "these teachers will oppose the truth." Amazingly, the people in churches who promote this empty religion, this religion without relationship, this religion without repentance, this religion of rituals, this religion where you can do what you want in your own time, are counted as **teachers** of religion. They are shown respect and are given authority and are supported. But God promises that His judgement against them is coming.

All this was predicted in Revelation 3 where Jesus rebukes the church of Lukewarm church of Laodica, the church of the last days.

Revelation 3:14-20 NKJV

"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,

'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ¹⁵ "I know your works, that you are neither cold [in open rebellion against God] nor hot [a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ]. I could wish you were cold or

hot. ¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm [pretending to be a true disciple of Christ], and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

¹⁷ Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; **and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.** ¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

The clothes or white garments here represent the righteousness of Christ. We need Jesus' forgiveness, His gift of pardon. Without it we are hopelessly spiritually poor, naked and blind. Without it we are lost—Jesus is on the outside waiting to come in. If you have never repented of your sins and turned to God, if you have never counted the cost and made the conscious decision to make Jesus the most important part of your life and to be willing to obey anything that He commands, and then asked to receive God's gift of pardon, then do it today and escape the snare of empty religion and experience true relationship with God.

Next week we will see how this all plays out during the tribulation. God will use one evil entity to destroy another. God is in control.