

Revelation Chapter 16  
Handout

*This chapter seems to follow very closely the pattern set up in Chapter 8. The plagues are similar and are centered around the basic divisions of nature: earth, sea, rivers, sky. There are here seven plagues, meaning the fullness of God's judgment. The differences between these and the plagues of Chapter 8 have to do with the fact that most of these plagues affect not only the earth but the people living on it, whereas in Chapter 8 only one of the plagues affects humanity directly. Also these plagues are total in effect... all of the things die. What this chapter promises is that none of God's enemies will escape the sure and certain judgment of God.*

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

*The time has come and nothing is going to stop God from fulfilling the promises he has made to the saints.*

2 So the first angel went and poured his bowl on the earth, and a foul and painful sore came on those who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped its image.

*Each of these plagues is offered in rapid fire order. There is no great explanation... merely a statement that they are occurring.*

*Mark of the beast - notice that the focus of the plague is not on the saints, they are protected, only those who have abandoned God are harmed.*

3 The second angel poured his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing in the sea died.

*All living things - the sea is where most of the ancient world derived its protein... so to destroy all in the sea was to pose the question of how will we survive?*

4 The third angel poured his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters say,

"You are just, O Holy One, who are and were,

for you have judged these things;

6 because they shed the blood of saints and prophets,

you have given them blood to drink.

It is what they deserve!"

7 And I heard the altar respond, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, your judgments are true and just!"

*Rivers and the springs - life cannot exist without water. Now that the people cannot have it they will begin to perish... which fits with the theme of God recreating the world*

*You are just - this is not God simply being angry... this is justice as delivered in a court of law. The people have transgressed and God has declared them to be guilty.*

*Shed the blood - what goes around comes around. The people have killed the innocent followers of God, so now they suffer the consequences.*

8 The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch them with fire; 9 they were scorched by the fierce heat, but they cursed the name of God, who had authority over these plagues, and they did not repent and give him glory.

*On the sun - very frightening because there was no cure for being burned  
Cursed God - this becomes a spiritual lesson. They know that God is in charge and they prefer to continue to worship the beast because they believe that the beast has all power. There is an amazing thing about people and faith, even when the one they follow has been proved to be false people seldom leave, they only become more fixed in their loyalty.*

*Did not repent- there is still time to change... God is always open*

10 The fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness; people gnawed their tongues in agony, 11 and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores, and they did not repent of their deeds.

*Throne of the Beast - no longer does the Beat appear to have all power. Those who follow him can no longer see where they are going... nor can they really follow.*

*Gnawed their tongues - they had give all power and loyalty to the beast... they had spoken allegiance now they regret it*

*Did not repent - even though they regretted what they had done they were still not willing to admit their guilt and repent. They become even more intransigent.*

12 The sixth angel poured his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up in order to prepare the way for the kings from the east. 13 And I saw three foul spirits like frogs coming from the mouth of the dragon, from the mouth of the beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet. 14 These are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.

*Great river Euphrates - this is the place of those who have always been opposed to God. The East was the location of Assyria, Babylon and Persia. Without a river to cross it will make it easy for the forces of evil to gather and make on last push to destroy the people of God.*

*Three foul spirits - these are spirits unleashed by the three false gods, in an attempt to fool the kings of the East into the their plans... this is done by the signs they perform.*

*Great day of God Almighty- the is the Day of the Lord, the day when God will finally act and bring to ruin all those who have opposed him*

15("See, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and is clothed, not going about naked and exposed to shame.") 16 And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Harmagedon.

*I am coming - this is a recurring theme in the New Testament. Jesus often reminds his followers that they need to be constantly vigilant because there are those who would deceive them and if they are deceived they might not be ready for the Day of the Lord. Also see the churches of Sardis and Laodicea. They each receive a similar warning... thus tying the book together.*

*Harmagedon - this has been explained as the place where the final battle will take place. Many people have tried to tie it to an exact geographical location (Meggido) however the way Hebrew works it could simply mean the place where the armies will gather.*

17 The seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"

*Voice from the temple, from the throne - the angel pours but God declares. The final portion of God's wrath has come.*

18 And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a violent earthquake, such as had not occurred since people were upon the earth, so violent was that earthquake. 19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. God remembered great Babylon and gave her the wine-cup of the fury of his wrath. 20 And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found; 21 and huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, dropped from heaven on people, until they cursed God for the plague of the hail, so fearful was that plague.

*Violent earthquake - again even the earth itself... which has saved the woman...is being torn apart. Creation itself is being used to attack God's enemies.*

*Great city was split... the cities of the nations fell - the very strongholds of opposition to God cannot stand against the wrath. Even though it seems they are invincible, they are not*

*Babylon - the center of evil is given special attention by God for it is the center of evil*

*Hailstones - everything is bigger than life*

*Cursed God - this is what Peter does when he denies Christ*