It gives me no pleasure to teach this chapter, for it speaks of God’s final judgments upon the earth before Christ returns; there are texts that I could select that would be positive, joyous, thrilling, and hopeful, but this is not one of them; there are texts that I could select that would more meet your needs than what I am about to teach, yet, we must not forget that “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

You may ask, “If you don’t like teaching this chapter, why not skip over it?” My answer is, “I am committed to teach the whole counsel of God and not just those parts of Scripture which make us feel warm and fuzzy”; one thing the book of Revelation teaches about God is: He is a God of mercy and He is a God of wrath; it is important that we understand chapters like Revelation 16, for not only do we need to be reminded that a day of judgment is coming, but we also need to be equipped to share with our unbelieving family and friends that God is not only a God of love, He is also a God of severe judgment.

We should not forget that Jesus was a proclaimer of judgment; He preached damnation; He had more to say about hell than about heaven (Matthew 18:7–9; 23:33); Paul spoke of Jesus Christ, the Lord, being revealed from heaven with His mighty angels and flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power (2 Thessalonians 1:7–9); Peter spoke of a day when this earth and all the works therein will melt with fervent heat (2 Peter 3:10); the writer of Hebrews said, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God” (Hebrews 10:31).

This being said, let’s get into our text.
The Prelude to the Bowl Judgments (15:5–8; 16:1)

The summoning of seven angels with seven bowls of wrath... Seven angels come out of the Holy of Holies in heaven clothed in pure bright linen and their chests girded with golden bands; then one of the four living creatures hands them seven bowls full of the wrath of God; the temple is filled with the power and the glory of God as smoke fills the temple; that smoke lingers until the seven angels pour out God’s wrath upon the earth and the judgments of God are complete; this is the final of the seven trumpet judgments and the last of the three “woe” judgments.

When the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, it blares throughout the second half of the Tribulation; out of that long trumpet blast come the seven angels holding the seven bowls of wrath ready to deposit them upon the earth.

Chapter 16 opens, “Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, ‘Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth’” (16:1); that loud voice was undoubtedly the voice of God.

The similarities between the seven bowl judgments to the plagues of Egypt and the trumpet judgments... Before we look at the judgments from these bowls of wrath, let me give an overview; these terrible judgments can be compared to some of the plagues of Egypt (Exodus 7–12) and to some of the trumpet judgments (Revelation 8–11); there are similarities and there are differences; concerning the differences: in the plagues of Egypt, they happened to one country; in the trumpet judgments, some happened to a third of the world; but, when we come to the bowl of wrath judgments they cover the whole world.

When you study the plagues of Egypt they involved water turning to blood, frogs, lice, flies, disease among the cattle, boils, thunder and hail, locusts, darkness, and the slaughter of the first born.

When you study the seven trumpet judgments they will involve fire and hail destroying a third of all trees and vegetation; something like a flaming mountain being cast into the sea, destroying a third of the sea life, and turning the sea a blood-red color; then a falling star called Wormwood falls into freshwater and one third of the water becomes poisonous and bitter; then the smiting of a third of the sun, moon and stars causing a darkness and coldness to come over the earth.

The next three trumpet judgments are called “woe” judgments; the first woe judgment will be demonic locusts overrunning the world and stinging people for
five months; the second “woe” will be the loosing of four angels who are bound at the river Euphrates and the coming of a great demonic army 200 million strong into Israel.

When we come to the last “woe” and the sound of the seventh trumpet, it will involve ulcerous sores on men, the seas turning to blood, the rivers turning to blood, the sun becoming scorchingly hot, the whole world becoming dark, the Euphrates river drying up, and worldwide pollution, accompanied by the greatest earthquake in the history of the world along with thunder, lightning, and hail.

All three judgments have these common features: hail, darkness, rivers to blood, sores, and frogs—whether real or demonic.

Let’s get into chapter 16 and see what happens as each angel, one after the other, in rapid succession, pours out his bowl of wrath on the earth.

The Pouring Out of God’s Wrath (16:2–21)

The first angel poured out his bowl of God’s wrath on the earth... “a foul and loathsome sore came on the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image” (16:2); the word for “sore” (helkos) is the word for ulcer, or a foul smelling, malignant growing incurable sore; one that oozes over the body; it is the same word used to describe the sores on the body of the beggar Lazarus in Jesus’ story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:21); the entire unbelieving world is going to be inflicted with unbelievable pain with these loathsome sores all over their body.

The LXX uses this same Greek word helkos to describe the boils on the Egyptians as one of the plagues that inflicted the land; God also promised to strike Israel with incurable boils as a curse for their disobedience to His laws (Deuteronomy 28:15, 27, 35).

Remember the OT story of the Philistines who captured the Ark of the Covenant and put it in temple of Dagon in the town of Ashdod? This was in the day of Eli, the high priest, who when hearing the news that his son had died in war and the ark had been captured, fell over backwards and died; but, once that Ark ended up in temple of Dagon, not only did the statue of Dagon fall on its face before the Ark breaking its head and hands, so that only its torso was left unbroken, but the people of Ashdod and the surrounding territory were struck with tumors (1
Samuel 5:1–12); Dagon was said to be the Babylonian god of grain and the father of Baal.

So the first plague from the bowl judgments is loathsome sores on the bodies of all unbelievers.

The second angel poured out his bowl of God’s wrath on the sea... “The sea... became blood as of a dead man, and every living creature in the sea died” (16:3); this is like the first plague that fell on Egypt (Exodus 7:20–25); and like the second trumpet when a fiery mountain was thrown into the sea and the sea became blood and a third of the sea life died and a third of the ships were destroyed (8:8–9).

From time to time we get here in California what is known as a “Red Tide,” where the water turns a blood red and millions of fish die; I read about a red tide that hit the coast of Florida back in 1949; first the water turned a yellowish color with countless billions of tiny one-celled organisms called dinoflagellates; by midsummer, millions of fish died turning the tides a blood-red color; when sixty mile an hour winds arose, stinking fish fouled the beaches; even bait used by fishermen died on the hooks; eating fish contaminated by the tide produced severe symptoms from nerve poisoning, which proved to be deadly.

These “Red Tides” also cause the growth of organisms called *pfiesteria piscicida*, a Latin term meaning “fish killer”; these microorganisms can be traced from the coast of South America up to the coasts of North Carolina, killing sea life and turning the ocean waters to a blood red.

When the second plague is poured out, it destroys sea life, creates a type of red tide that can cause people to die if they were to eat any of the fish.

The third angel poured out his bowl of God’s wrath on the rivers and springs of water... “… and the rivers and springs of water became blood” (16:4–7); this should remind us again of that plague of Egypt when the Nile River turned into blood (Exodus 7:19–21).

In this plague we have an “angel of the waters saying: ‘You are righteous, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have judged these things, for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due’” (16:5–7).
The old saying, “What comes around goes around...”; those who have worshipped the Beast have shed the blood of those who were faithful to God; remember, the opening of the fifth seal when those martyred from out of the Tribulation were praying under the altar of incense, “How long, O Lord, until You avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” (Revelation 6:10); with the pouring out of the third bowl of wrath, God is forcing the unbelievers—those who martyred the saints by shedding their blood—to now drink blood; this angel of the waters is praising God by saying, “You are righteous, You have judged these things; true and righteousness are Your judgments to make people drink blood who have shed the blood of the martyrs.”

God operates on the principle that the punishment must fit the crime; what evil you do to another shall be done to you; the OT code of justice is: “life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (Deuteronomy 19:21); if we had this justice system today, we would cut down on crime in a serious way; justice must also be carried out swiftly or crime will increase; Solomon wrote: “Because the sentence against an evil worker is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in then to do evil” (Ecclesiastes 8:11).

When the third plague is poured out, the rivers and spring water turn to blood, and those who have martyred the saints are forced to drink that blood; it’s payback time as God exercises His principle of justice: what you have done to another shall be done to you!

*The fourth angel poured out his bowl of God’s wrath on the sun.... “... and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory” (16:8–9); at one time, it was freezing cold and people were dying because of the lack of heat; that is when the fourth trumpet sounded and a third of the sun, moon and stars were darkened (Revelation 8:12–13); now the sun is so hot people are being scorched by the sun; global warming has returned to the extreme; we have to believe that only the unbelievers are scorched, and not those who have put their faith in God.*

One of the sins of mankind throughout history has been to worship the created rather than the Creator; the earliest form of paganism was sun worship; it goes all the way back to ancient Babylon and the world’s first dictator named Nimrod who was a sun worshipper; Bab El was the sight to the first temple to the sun and from out of Babel came the false religion of astrology and the signs of the zodiac to determine your destiny.
When people were scorched by the sun, “they blasphemed the name of God and did not repent and give Him glory” (16:9b); it was Albert Einstein who said: “It is easier to denature plutonium than to denature the evil spirit of man”; even Einstein had to admit that man is born naturally evil and selfish, and to denature that evil is impossible; however, what man cannot do, God does when we come to Him through Jesus Christ and receive from the Holy Spirit a divine nature as the old man of sin who has lived with us is put to death (Romans 6:4–6; 2 Peter 1:2–4).

One of the biggest mistakes of modern day philosophers and sociologists is to teach that man is basically good and he only does wrong to protect himself; Jeremiah reminds us that “the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately sick” (Jeremiah 17:9).

The fourth plague is unbelievers being scorched by the sun and they blaspheme the name of God as a result and refuse to repent.

**The fifth angel poured out his bowl of God’s wrath on the throne of the beast...**

“... and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds” (16:10–11).

The throne of the beast is Babylon, which most likely is Rome, though some see it as the restored city of Babylon; whichever it is, it is the capital of the world empire under the Antichrist; once this bowl of wrath is emptied, darkness covers his kingdom; this reminds us of the ninth plague of Egypt when darkness covered the land (Exodus 10:21–23); Isaiah prophesied a day when “darkness shall cover the earth” (Isaiah 60:2); the prophet Joel spoke of a day of the Lord and it will come as “a day of darkness, a day of clouds and thick darkness, the sun shall be turned to darkness” (Joel 2:2).

There have been days of unexplained darkness in our nation’s history; there was “The Dark Day” in New England, May 19, 1780; there was 10 minutes of darkness over Central Wisconsin, March 19, 1886; there was unexplained darkness over Memphis, Tennessee, December 1904, as well as Louisville, Kentucky, March 1911.

Not only will there be darkness over the kingdom of the Antichrist, people will be in such pain they will be gnawing their tongues; they will be biting their tongues, chewing on their tongues to distract themselves from their agony; yet, instead of
repenting, they blasphme the name of God; unbelievable how stubborn some people can be when it comes to giving their life to God.

The fifth plague is darkness over the kingdom of the Antichrist and gnawing pain inflicted on the unbelievers.

The sixth angel poured out his bowl of God’s wrath on the river Euphrates…
“...and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them together to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. ‘Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.’ And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon” (16:12–16).

This reminds us of the sixth trumpet judgment, or what is referred to as the second of the three woe judgments, when four angels were bound at the river Euphrates; once they were set free, two hundred million demonic horsemen were released from east of the Euphrates and they come into Israel killing a third of the people; God is going to dry up the Euphrates so the kings from the east can come to make war in the battle of Armageddon; just as God parted the waters of the Red Sea so the children of Israel could cross over safely, so God will dry up the Euphrates so these demonic soldiers from the east can enter Israel.

The phase, “kings from the east,” in the Greek text should be translated, “kings of the rising sun”; they are coming from China, India, Japan, wherever great empires will be at that time, and they are coming to Israel to fight in the battle of Armageddon; why do they come? To fight against the Antichrist who by this time is not a popular dictator; according to Daniel 11:40–45, the Antichrist and his army are in Israel; he has already had to contend with armies from the north and south, when he hears rumblings from the east that trouble him, he stations himself and his army in the plain of Megiddo, between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean, where he will meet his fate.

Megiddo is actually a hill that looks down on the Plain of Esdraelon, also called the Plain of Jezreel; it is a plain that Napoleon called “the greatest battlefield he has ever seen;” this was the plain where Barak and Deborah overthrew and defeated Sisera and his chariots (Judges 5:19–21); where Ahaziah died by the
arrows of Jehu (2 Kings 9:27); where King Josiah perished at the hands of Pharaoh Necho (2 Kings 23:29–30); Megiddo and the plain of Esdraelon was the sight of many of the great decisive battles in eastern history, and it would be natural to think of it as the site of the last and the greatest battle of all; it was a battleground, as H.B. Swete says, “familiar to a student of Hebrew history.”

It should be noted that some Bible versions have Armageddon and some have Harmagedon; Armageddon means the city of Megiddo; Harmagedon means the mountain of Megiddo; it is most likely the latter form is right, for when one stands on the mountain of Megiddo, located 60 miles north of Jerusalem, he sees before him this enormous Plain of Esdraelon.

Who brings the armies together for this final battle, the mother of all battles? God does by using three unclean spirits like frogs that come out of the mouth of the dragon, Satan; out of the mouth of the beast, the Antichrist; and out of the mouth of the false prophet; they are spirits of demons; they perform signs and wonders that convince the kings of the earth to gather their armies for battle in the place in Hebrew called Armageddon.

These frogs represent the unholy trinity—Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet; frogs were considered unclean animals under the Levitical Law (Leviticus 11:10); in ancient Greece frogs were a sex symbol representing fertility; in ancient Egypt frogs were associated with the goddess Hegt who helped women in childbirth; in Zoroastrianism of ancient Persia, frogs were considered the source of plagues on the people; so these demonic frogs come from the mouths of the unholy trinity, but it is God who sent them, for they become His plague upon mankind when the sixth angel poured out his bowl of wrath.

There is a warning given by Jesus before the seventh bowl is poured out; “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame” (16:15); this is a respite between the sixth and seventh bowl, a message of hope to the believer; with the nations gathering for battle in this final war, you had better be on the alert; Christ’s return will be soon and sudden; His return is often compared to the coming of a thief, suddenly and unexpectedly (Matthew 24:42; Revelation 22:7; 1 Thessalonians 5:2–3; 2 Peter 3:10); the unbeliever will not be prepared, but no Christian in the days of the Tribulation should be surprised at His coming, any more than any Christian today should be caught off guard by the rapture of the Church (1 Thessalonians 5:4); blessings are promised to those who are prepared for His coming by being dressed in garments of righteousness.
The sixth plague is the drying up of the river Euphrates to allow a massive
demonic army from the east to enter the battle of Armageddon; the nations are
gathered together by God, who uses three demonic frogs from the mouths of
Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet; here again God is using Satan for
His own purpose which will ultimately do him in.

*The seventh angel poured out his bowl of God’s wrath into the air...* “...and a loud
voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne saying, ‘It is done!’ And
there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great
earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men
were on the earth. Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities
of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her
the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Then every island fled away
and the mountains were not found. And great hail from heaven fell upon men,
each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the
plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great” (16:17–21).

The seventh bowl finishes God’s wrath on man in this present earth; this plagued
is followed by the second coming of Christ to the earth where He sets up His
Millennial Kingdom; the final judgment of all those who have joined Satan’s
rebellion will not take place until after the thousand years is finished.

When the seventh angel poured out his bowl of wrath, a loud voice from heaven
said, “It is done!” In the Greek text it is a perfect tense, meaning it has been and
will remain done; Satan will be locked into the bottomless pit, the curse on the
earth will be removed and at the coming of Christ’s kingdom there will be a
renovated heaven and earth; the environment will change where people born
during the Millennium could live 1000 years; the desert will bloom like a rose, a
child will play with an snake and not be harmed, the lion and the wolf will lie down
together; then at the end of the thousand years, there will be one final rebellion
on the part of Satan as he will temporarily be released from the pit, only to have
fire from heaven fall upon him and his cohorts; then he will be cast into the lake
of fire; after the thousand years the heavens and the earth will be completely
recreated; there will be a new heaven and a new earth, with the New Jerusalem
coming down out of heaven on this new earth and eternity with Christ begins.

The seventh trumpet produces the greatest earthquake the world has ever seen;
it is interesting that the seventh seal judgment produced an earthquake (8:5); the
seventh trumpet judgment produced an earthquake (11:19) and now the seventh bowl of wrath produces an even greater earthquake (16:18).

This final earthquake caused severe damage to the earth; cities and nations were ruined; topography was radically changed; Babylon, which I believe to be Rome and the headquarters of the Antichrist, was remembered before God and split in thirds as it faced the fierceness of God’s wrath (we will read of her total destruction in chapter 18).

As if the earthquake was not enough, there were noises, lightnings and thunderings along with 100 pound hailstones that fell on men; can you imagine a 100 pound hailstone conking you on the noggin? But still people did not repent; they simply blasphemed God because the plague of the hail was exceedingly great.

To summarize the bowl judgments that come from out of the seventh trumpet we learn these things: God’s judgments are righteous regardless of what the world may think (16:1–2); God’s judgments come on sinners not to reveal His grace, but to uphold His holiness (16:5–6); God’s judgments do not change men’s hearts (16:8–11); God’s judgments will one day be finished (16:17–21).

Augustus Hopkins Strong wrote: “In righteousness, God reveals chiefly His love of holiness; in justice, chiefly His hatred of sin... Neither justice nor righteousness... is a matter of arbitrary will. They are revelations of the inmost nature of God.”