

## Chapter 15

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This chapter introduces the seven plagues which will be unleashed on the wicked in the last days. Surprisingly, rather than a vision of sorrow, John sees the joy and happiness exhibited by the righteous because the Lord is cleansing the earth. This chapter mainly contains praises to God for the great things that He is about to bring to pass on behalf of the righteous.

**Verse 1:** John "*saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous*". This is but another of the sign of the second coming of the Savior. John says that he saw, "*seven angels having the seven last plagues*". The seven last plagues are remarkably similar to the sounding of the seven trumps in which John spoke of previously. In fact, I would suggest that they are one and the same. The seven plagues are held by seven angels. Likewise, the seven trumps were sounded by the presumed seven arch angels. It is suggested that the seven angels spoken of here, with the seven plagues, are the seven archangels.

What are these plagues? John says that "*in them is filled up the wrath of God*". God has often times used plagues to humble His people. In the book of Exodus, we read, "*For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth (Exodus 9:14)*". He also used plagues to destroy the wicked. He told Israel, "*if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins (Leviticus 26:21)*". On prime example of this is the city of Sodom and Gomorrah, which the Lord visited with a plague of fire and brimstone to destroy the wicked. Of the last days, those being our dispensation, the Lord said, "*For I, the Almighty, have laid my hands upon the nations, to scourge them for their wickedness. And plagues shall go forth, and they shall not be taken from the earth until I have completed my work, which shall be cut short in righteousness-- (Doctrine and Covenants 84:96-97)*".

Many would like to think that the saints will be spared from the plagues of the last days; however, that is not so. True, the plagues are sent for the wicked, but the righteous will endure many hardships because of the wickedness of the world. The prophet Joseph Smith taught, "*I explained concerning the coming of the Son of Man; also that it is a false idea that the saints will escape all the judgments, whilst the wicked suffer; for all flesh is subject to suffer, and the 'righteous shall hardly escape'; still many saints will escape, for the just shall live by faith*". The days of the plagues of the earth will require the extreme faith of the righteous. It will require saints to rely

on the priesthood, and their testimonies in the true and living God. The saints must hold to the idea that the sufferings and hardships that they endure will be nothing compared to their eternal rest, if they are but worthy.

**Verse 2:**

John now sees *"as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire"*. Other references to a sea of glass, refer to the earth in it's exalted state. Previously, John said he saw the throne of God, *"And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind (Revelation 4:6)"*. The prophet Joseph inquired of the Lord in this matter as he asked, *"What is the sea of glass spoken of by John, 4th chapter, and 6th verse of the Revelation"*? The answer was given to him, *"It is the earth, in its sanctified, immortal, and eternal state (Doctrine and Covenants 77:1)"*. In a later vision the Prophet saw the celestial residence of angels, and recorded, *"But they reside in the presence of God, on a globe like a sea of glass and fire, where all things for their glory are manifest, past, present, and future, and are continually before the Lord (Doctrine and Covenants 130:7)"*. Literally residing on a sea of glass mingled with fire, where all things are manifest, both past, present and future, is beyond our current comprehension; however, the reality is, if we live properly we will experience it for ourselves. The symbolic imagery is significant. The term fire symbolizes purity. Since no unclean thing may dwell in the presence of the Father, it is a quite fitting symbol. The sea of glass could symbolically represent a multitude of people that have become purified unto perfection. The term sea often represents people, while the word glass symbolizes purity, perfection, and clarity.

Who will be worthy to reside in such a place? John says those that are worthy are those *"that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God"*. They are those that have forsaken the world, and all that it stands for. They are those that have committed their lives unto the Lord.

**Verses 3-4:**

*"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,*



*Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty;  
just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.  
Who shall not fear thee,  
O Lord, and glorify thy name?  
for thou only art holy:  
for all nations shall come and worship before thee;*

*for thy judgments are made manifest”.*

Moses wrote several songs during the time he lead the children of Israel. The following are two that are recorded in the Old Testament;

***Exodus 15:1-19***

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.



The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The LORD shall reign for ever and ever. For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.

***Deuteronomy 32:1-14***

Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel (Deuteronomy 31:22).



Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation. Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee? Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.

**Verse 5:** *"And after that" John "looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened".* The temple has significant meaning to the children of God. It symbolizes his presence. It was in the temple that Israel communed with their God. In the old Testament we read that in, *"the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation ..... I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy (Exodus 30:36)"*.

Tabernacle also represents the wrath of God. Israel was commanded that *"the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony (Numbers 1:53)"*. Symbolically, the righteous were to assemble before the Lord, that His wrath might be held.

This passage corresponds to one found in Revelation chapter eleven (11), which reads, *"And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail (Revelation 11:19)"*. We might conclude that the earth is wicked before the Lord. They have not symbolically assembled before the Lord. Because of this, His wrath is full, and the wicked shall be destroyed.

**Verse 6:** *"And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles".* The seven angels are sent from the temple, symbolizing that they are coming from the presence of the Almighty. This would indicate that they are under the direction of the Father. They have the seven plagues. The seven plagues symbolize His wrath, and the destruction of the wicked. They also represent the cleansing of the earth in preparation for the return of the King of kings. The angels are clothed in white linen, indicating their purity and their righteousness. The breasts are girded with golden girdles. The color gold symbolizes the sun, exaltation, royalty, and celestial glory. Their girdles symbolize one strength, power and authority. It is obvious that these seven angels are very important and powerful individuals. It is probable that they are the seven archangels, of whom we know that Michael and Gabriel are numbered.

**Verse 7:** John sees *"one of the four beasts"* that he saw in the beginning of his vision come unto *"the seven angels"*. The beast gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials. As we will discuss in greater detail in the next chapter, the golden vials refer to the atonement. The significance

of the beast delivering the seven vials is puzzling. It might symbolize the fact that the plagues are all encompassing. No beast, man, or insect will escape the wrath of God. The pouring out of the vials symbolizes that the time for partaking of the atonement of the Savior is at end. Those that have turned away from the Saviors offer, will feel ***"of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever"***. They will experience the plagues of the seven angels, which will follow the pouring of the seven vials.

**Verse 8:**

I can't help but to think that the Father of all living is deeply sorrowed by what he must do. We are told that ***"no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled"***. No one was allowed in his presence until the task was performed. I think of the Savior as he hung on the cross, it was then that the heavens withdrew themselves and the sky's were filled with darkness. The spirit of the Father withdrew itself, as the Son of Man completes the final element in the great atonement. Matthew records, *"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me (Matthew 27:45-46)"*? I would imagine that the Father will operate in much the same manner in the last days as he did at the death of his firstborn. The spirit will be withdrawn and mankind will ask, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me (Matthew 27:45-46)"*? Those that have accepted the sacrifice of the son will be heard in latter times in the presence of the Father praising his name, while those that haven't will pay the price of their sins themselves.