

Chapter 15

This chapter kicks off with John seeing seven angels having seven last plagues filled with the wrath of God. [Verse 1]. There is no indication that these are the same angels as those with the seven trumpets in [Revelation 8 & 9 & D&C 85]; who depict the history of man living in each of the seven thousand year epochs. The angels of this chapter appear near the end of the time covered by the seventh of those angels.

[Chapters 15 and 16] describe events which lead up to and climax at the end of the millennium. They are like telescopes zooming in on the end of [Chapter 14] to show mankind what they can expect during the little season, and the time of the “battle of the great day of God Almighty;” [Revelation 16:14] D&C calls it “the battle of the great God!” [D&C 85:35d]

[1] And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. ** review the study of [Ch 11:6] **

These “seven angels having the seven last plagues” are preparing to demonstrate the “wrath of God” upon the unholy. They appear at or near the end of the little season that Satan is loosed. They have seven plagues that are to be loosed upon earth, ending with the final conflict.

[2] And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them 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.

[Revelation 4:6] ... “before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal.”

So, John saw in a previous vision that the sea of glass was “like unto crystal,” but the sea of this chapter he saw as a sea “mingled with fire.” Both of these descriptions are meaningful; fire often signifies that which purifies and crystal connotes purity.

Malachi prophesied about this characteristic of fire around 450 to 400 B.C., therefore the Nephites could not have brought his writings with them to this continent. But Jesus wanted them to have his prophesies so he had them to write them, as the following shows.

[3 Nephi 11:1-9] ... These are the words which he did tell unto them, saying, Thus said the Father unto Malachi, Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me, and the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. **[5]** But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appears? for **he is like a refiner's fire**, and like fuller's soap. **[6]** And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. **[7]** Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years. **[8]** And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the

sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger, and fear not me saith the Lord of hosts. [9] For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed. [Malachi 3:1-6]

[3 Nephi 11:28-33] ... These scriptures which you did not have with you, the Father commanded that I should give unto you, for it was wisdom in him that they should be given unto future generations. [30] And he did expound all things, even from the beginning until the time that he should come in his glory; [31] Yes, even all things which should come upon the face of the earth, even until the elements should melt with fervent heat, and the earth should be wrapped together as a scroll, and the heavens and the earth should pass away; [32] And even unto the great and last day, when all people, and all kindreds, and all nations and tongues shall stand before God, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil; ...

The “sea of glass” also indicates that they stand upon that which is pure and crystalline; for nothing is hid from view in that heavenly kingdom; there will be no secrets there. For just as they stood upon the pure, unadulterated, unmodified and absolute word of God while on earth, they shall be sustained by it in his presence. And as Jesus was victorious over sin, over death and over the grave; he strengthens those who love him and keep his commandments so that they also may rejoice in that same victory. They will be sanctioned to abide God’s presence; they will have been purified by the refiner’s fire; they will have been purged of their sins!

[2 Peter 3:10-13] But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall shake, and the earth also shall tremble, and the mountains shall melt, and pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be filled with fervent heat; the earth also shall be filled, and the **corruptible works** which are therein shall be burned up. [11] If then all these things shall be destroyed, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, [12] Looking unto, and preparing for the day of the coming of the Lord wherein the corruptible things of the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the mountains shall melt with fervent heat? [13] Nevertheless, if we shall endure, we shall be kept according to his promise. And we look for a new heavens, and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness.

[D&C 43:7a-8a] ... labor in my vineyard for the last time: [7b] for the last time call upon the inhabitants of the earth, for in my own due time will I come upon the earth in judgment; and my people shall be redeemed and shall reign with me on earth; [7c] for the great millennial, which I have spoken by the mouth of my servants, shall come; for Satan shall be bound; and when he is loosed again, he shall only reign for a little season, and then comes the end of the earth; [7d] and he that lives in righteousness, shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye; [7e] and **the earth shall pass away so as by fire;** [7f] and the wicked shall go away into unquenchable fire; [7g] and their end no man knows, on earth, nor ever shall know, until they come before me in judgment. [8a] Hearken to these words, behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

Now concerning the “sea of glass like unto crystal” which is mingled with fire, that fire which purifies; this fire will come from God to purify the earth and all the righteous who dwell upon it. Why is it referred to as “glass” and as glass like unto crystal?

And, as was stated, the glass suggests that nothing will be hidden from those who stand in God’s presence before his throne. There will be no secrets there. Only in the natural world is the truth not clearly seen, for Paul said, comparing this life to the one which is to come;

[1 Corinthians 13:12] For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

This same view from Paul has probably never been more eloquently stated than this:

“Whatever we may have to go through now is less than nothing compared with the magnificent future God has planned for us. The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own. The world of creation cannot as yet see reality, not because it chooses to be blind, but because in God’s purpose it has been so limited – yet it has been given hope. And the hope is that in the end the whole of created life will be rescued from the tyranny of change and decay, and have its share in that magnificent liberty which can only belong to the children of God!” [Romans 8:18-21] JBP

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be named with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to tribulation not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected it in hope; Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. [Romans 8:18-21] IV

It was God’s plan from the beginning that we see and experience that which is less than perfect, for only by experiencing a world flawed with imperfection can we realize the joy of a world which is perfect. But because man is continually looking “through a glass, darkly;” he is too often at ease with his circumstances, and doesn’t try to find a clearer, more transparent glass to look through; one that is more crystalline. Thus, the degree of darkness and clarity of the glass demonstrates the degree of passion one has for God’s word. The more one treasures his word, the more transparent the glass becomes, and the truths on which he stands is more clearly seen.

[D&C 50:6b-c] That which does not edify, is not of God, and is darkness: that which is of God is light, and he that receives light and continues in God, receives more light, and that light grows brighter and brighter, until the perfect day. [c] And .. I say it that you may know the truth, that you may chase darkness from among you,

[**D&C 90:4e**] He that keeps his commandments, receives truth and light, until he is glorified in truth, and knows all things.

[**Alma 9:18-20**] And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God, until they know them in full; [**19**] And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word, until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; [**20**] And then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction.

If man will not harden his heart and continue in God, the light he receives will grow brighter and brighter until the perfect day; and the truths on which he stands will become crystal clear; nothing will be hid from him; he will know all truth; he will stand upon the sea of glass like crystal.

Crystalline: [adjective] clear and transparent like crystal.

Thus, those who John saw standing on the sea of glass were those who, “had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name.” They had been purged of their sins; they were made perfect in Christ. Don’t let these metaphors distract you, for in short they mean that those who had gotten victory over the beast had “denied themselves all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and kept Jesus’ commandments. [**Matthew 16:26**]

[**Isaiah 25:8-9**] He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth; for the Lord has spoken it. [**9**] And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

[**1 John 5:3-4**] For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous. [**4**] For whosoever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

[3] And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are your ways, you King of saints.

[4] Who shall not fear you, O Lord, and glorify your name? for you only are holy; for all nations shall come and worship before you; for your judgments are made manifest.

[**Psalms 28:7**] The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices; and with my song will I praise him.

[**Psalms 33:3**] Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise. [**4**] For the word of the Lord is given to the upright, and all his works are done in truth.

[**Exodus 15:1-2**] Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spoke, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has

thrown into the sea. (The Egyptians) [2] The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

For those who truly love the God who “cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance,”[D&C 1:5f]; and not a god who is contrived by some to approve of their ungodly lifestyle; but those who believe in an unchanging God; to them, singing praises to him will be harmonious to the way they had lived their lives on earth.

**** Flashback ****

[Revelation 5:8-13] And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. [9] And they sung a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; [10] And have made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth. [11] And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; [12] Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. [13] And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.

[Revelation 14:2-3] And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps; [3] And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders; and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

Is it not amazing how the same Spirit has worked with people in the same way, promoting the same gospel to people of various nations, regardless of their culture; and of every culture, regardless of their behavior; offering the same promise of eternal life to those who love God and keep his commandments; to be in the presence of the Father and the Son, all those who “had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark.” But for those who worship the beast, or those who have his mark, the worst is yet to come.

[5] And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.

Temple: 1: an edifice for the worship of a deity 2: a place devoted to an exalted purpose [Webster]

Tabernacle: 1 often capitalized : a tent sanctuary used by the Israelites during the Exodus
2: a house of worship [Webster]

After the Israelites had made their exodus from Egypt and had begun their wandering in the wilderness, they were instructed to build a tabernacle of the testimony as a place of worship.

Testimony: 1. (Archaic.) the Ten Commandments. 2. [plural] the precepts of God; divine law.

Using these definitions, let's see if it can be determined what the **“the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened”** means. [Verse 5] Because Israel of old rejected the fullness of the gospel, the way they were instructed to worship served as types and shadows of the kingdom of heaven. They were visible expression of the workings and purpose of God's kingdom.

During their exodus, the Israelites' had to be very mobile, so they dwelt in and worshiped in tents, therefore, their **temple** (synagogue) of the **tabernacle** (most holy) of the **testimony** (the Ten Commandments) was very transportable. The Ten Commandments were kept in an ark, (**ark of the testimony**), which was a wooden chest or box in which the Israelites kept the two stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments; and the ark was kept in the tabernacle (most holy).

Thus, the children of Israel were commanded to build a tabernacle and were given detailed instructions as to how it should be built. Much of the physical structure that fashioned the tabernacle was allegorical to spiritual structures which define the tabernacle of the kingdom of heaven. For instance, there was a veil between the outer sanctuary, the “holy place,” and the inner sanctuary, the “most holy.” No one was allowed to enter into the most holy except the priesthood that had the authority to do so. The veil was allegorical of that “veil” which kept mankind from entering into God's presence, namely death, both physical and spiritual, and the grave.

[Exodus 26:33] And you shall hang up the veil under the taches, that you may bring in there within the veil the **ark of the testimony**; and the veil shall divide unto you between the **holy place** and the **most holy**.

[Exodus 38:21] This is the sum of the tabernacle, even of the **tabernacle of testimony**, as it was counted, according to the commandment of Moses, [Numbers 1:50-54]

But through the power of his resurrection, Jesus loosed man from an everlasting death! It is highly significant that, at that same time, the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom.

[Matthew 27:54-57] Jesus when he had cried again with a loud voice, saying, Father, it is finished, your will is done, yielded up the ghost. [55] And behold, **the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom**; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; [56] And the graves were opened; and the bodies of the saints which slept, arose, who were many. [57] And came out of the graves after his resurrection, went unto the holy city, and appeared unto many. [Mark 15:43]

John was likely aware of the scriptures in the old testament concerning the “temple” and the “tabernacle of the testimony,” because of their prominence among the children of Israel; however, he may not have understood their significance until he witnessed the event of [Matthew 27:55], and further understood as he was shown their parallel as recorded in [Revelation 15: 5].

[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.

[7] And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.

Many of the children of Israel rebelled against God after they came out of Egypt. They did not believe that he could deliver on his promise to give them the promised land because of the strength of those who inhabited it. Therefore God sent plagues upon the unbelievers which took their lives. Likewise, just prior to the end time, the unbelievers will be hit with the seven plagues referred to in [Verse 6] and will die spiritually, and not be allowed entrance into God's temple.

[Numbers 14:22-24, 26-38] Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; [23] Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it; [24] But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and has followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.

[26] And the Lord spoke unto Moses, and unto Aaron, saying, [27] How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. [28] Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as you have spoken in my ears, so will I do to you; [29] Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, [30] Doubtless you shall not come into the land, concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. [31] But your little ones, which you said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. [32] But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. [33] And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. [34] After the number of the days in which he searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall you bear your iniquities, even forty years, and you shall know my breach of promise. [35] I the Lord have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me; in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die. [36] And the men which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land. [37] Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord. [38] But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still.

[8] And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled

A word, when used as a metaphor, may symbolize something good or something bad, depending on it's use in a sentence. "Smoke" is one of those words. Examples follow:

[Exodus 19:17-18] And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. [18] And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

[2 Samuel 22:7-9] In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears. [8] Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because he was wroth. [9] There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

* see also [Psalms 18:6-8] & [Job 41:19-21]

The previous scriptures refer to “smoke” as a manifestation of God’s power; but now we shall see a broader meaning of this manifestation in the following scriptures.

[Isaiah 4:2-5] In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. [3] And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remains in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: [4] When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. [5] And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defense.

[Exodus 13:21-22] And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: [22] He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

[Exodus 14:18-20] And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten me honor upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. [19] And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: [20] And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to the Israelites: so that the one came not near the other all the night.

Notice that there was something paradoxical about this cloud; it was a cloud of darkness to the Egyptians, but it appeared as light to the Israelites. This is correlative to how the rebellious perceive Spiritual truth as opposed to the way the righteous see it; the one sees it as darkness while the other sees it as light. This may seem a little strange, but consider the following:

[Matthew 6:22-23] The light of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye be single to the glory of God, your whole body shall be full of light. [23] But if your eye be evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light which is in you is darkness, how great shall that darkness be. [Luke 11:35-37]

*this phenomena will be reemphasized in [Revelation 17:8].

“If the light which is in you is darkness” is quite an enigmatic and contradictory statement, but the reason it seem to be contradictory is that those who replace the light and truth of God with their own, do not see the darkness of their perceptions. [D&C 90:4b, 5d, 6a-c] It is sort of like this:

[**John 9:39-41**] Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. [**40**] And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? [**41**] Jesus said unto them, If you were blind, you should have no sin; but now you say, We see; therefore your sin remains.

And again Jesus said:

[**John 15:22-24**] If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. [**23**] He that hates me hates my Father also. [**24**] If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.

Understand that those to whom Jesus was talking in the preceding scriptures were those who believed that God had called them to be ministers. But Jesus told them to their faces that they were “teaching the doctrines and commandments of men.” [**Matthew 15:8**] [**Mark 7:7**]

Now that we have seen examples where “smoke” represented something good, i.e., the power and light of God, lets see also where it signifies something bad.

In [**Isaiah 65:1-5**] the Lord rebukes his people for committing so many ungodly things in the name of religion; he said “they are smoke in my nose.”

[**Revelation 9:2-3**] And he, *the fifth angel*, opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. [**3**] And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. * review [**Chapter 9**] for the meaning.

[**Revelation 14:11**] The smoke of their torment ascended up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and ... received the mark of his name.

There are other references to “smoke” as a symbol of good and/or bad, but these should suffice.

No man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled. [**Verse 8**] The temple referred to is likely the celestial glory which will commence after these plagues are fulfilled, the final conflict is fought, and the final judgement takes place, which shall all be accomplished shortly, and in that order.

[**John 3:19-22**] And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. [**20**] For every one who does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. [**21**] But he who loves truth, comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest. [**22**] And he who obeys the truth, the works which he does they are of God.