



THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

"Sea Saints"

4:6a

Revelation 4:6 Before the throne *there was* a sea of glass, like crystal...

Glassy seas may be good if you are out on the ocean but that is not what is meant here by **a sea of glass**.

The **sea of glass** that is **before the throne** is an area in Heaven. We might learn a little about it if we look at how it was represented on the earth in the wilderness Tabernacle and (later) Solomon's Temple.

When God gave instruction about building the Tabernacle within which He was to be worshipped He said,

Exodus 30:18 "You shall also make **a laver of bronze**, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it,

The word **laver** means a *bath* or *wash basin* containing water for the purpose of washing. No measurements or instructions are given as to the shape and size of the **laver**. The only thing mentioned is that it had a stand (Exodus 31:9), which made it easier to wash, and it was made of solid bronze.

The Jewish priests were commanded to continually wash their hands and feet during their Tabernacle service.

The laver was placed between the door of the Holy Place and the altar. The appointed priest, as he entered the gate of the outer court, faced the altar, where he made a sacrifice for himself like any other Israelite. Once beyond the altar he was ready to act as a serving priest and so at the **laver** he washed. He could then minister back at the altar or in the Holy Place because he washed at the laver.

Once he went in to the Holy Place and emerged he again washed at the laver.

When the time came for Solomon to build God's Temple he went all out. Since there were no dimensions given in Exodus for the laver he came up with a magnificent one.

It was called, depending upon your translation the Sea of Bronze or the Molten Sea of Brass. The term 'sea' referred to the huge amount of water it could contain. A bath is roughly six to ten gallons. If my math is correct this sea could hold as much as a large swimming pool!

It is described in First Kings seven and Second Chronicles four. Let me read from First Kings.

1 Kings 7:23 And he made the Sea of cast bronze, ten cubits from one brim to the other; *it was* completely round. Its height *was* five cubits, and a line of thirty cubits measured its circumference.

1 Kings 7:24 Below its brim *were* ornamental buds encircling it all around, ten to a cubit, all the way around the Sea. The ornamental buds *were* cast in two rows when it was cast.

1 Kings 7:25 It stood on twelve oxen: three looking toward the north, three looking toward the west, three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east; the Sea *was set* upon them, and all their back parts *pointed* inward.

1 Kings 7:26 It *was* a handbreadth thick; and its brim was shaped like the brim of a cup, *like* a lily blossom. It contained two thousand baths.

You are expected to understand that **the sea of glass** in Heaven is represented by the laver in the Tabernacle and, later, the Sea of Bronze in Solomon's Temple.

By the way. I ran across a fascinating insight about Solomon's Sea of Bronze. There is an apparent contradiction in the Bible in its dimensions. We read it was **ten cubits from one brim to the other; it was completely round. Its height was five cubits, and a line of thirty cubits measured its circumference.** If you have a mathematical mind you know that cannot be correct. Anything truly circular in form has a precise, well known, mathematical ratio between its diameter and its circumference; that ratio is known as π . Pi is approximately 3.14159 having a decimal portion which extends endlessly.

The solution is really very simple. Though it is described as round (circular in other versions), the word doesn't always mean a perfect circle. Even in English we talk about "circling a building." We mean we walk *around* it – but not in a perfect geometric circle.

If it wasn't a perfect circle, what shape was it? The Sea of Bronze is also described as being **a handbreadth thick; and its brim was shaped like the brim of a cup, like a lily blossom.** All true lilies have how many petals? Six. Thus the Sea of Bronze is really a hexagon. The math then works out perfectly!

The earthly lavers were representations of what is actually in Heaven. The **laver** and, later, the Sea of Bronze were where you cleansed yourself in order to approach and serve the Lord.

- being changed to bring change -
In the New Testament this idea of being cleansed by washing with water is presented in a different way. Instead of an external washing with literal water Jesus washes His church spiritually.

In Ephesians 5:26-27 we read that Jesus is busy cleansing us ...**with the washing of water by the word, that He might present [us] to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that [we] should be holy and without blemish.**

The word used for **washing** means a *laver*. There is a definite connection to what we learned in the Old Testament. Except that now you and I, both individually and corporately, are the Temple of God on the earth. We are washed by Jesus as we encounter His Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We saw in verse four that there are twenty-four elders around the **Throne** in the vicinity of the **sea**. We showed in a previous study why we believe the twenty-four elders are the church raptured and rewarded before the Great Tribulation begins.

We also saw that there were **seven lamps of fire... burning around the Throne**. These can be connected to Jesus' description of the church in chapter one.

The **sea** that the church surrounds in chapter four is somewhat clear. I say that because the word for **crystal** is derived from the word for *ice* and indicates a clarity.

We'll see **the sea of glass, like crystal** again in chapter fifteen of the Revelation. Only it won't be clear like ice.

Revelation 15:2 And I saw *something* like **a sea of glass** mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark *and* over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.

The various coloration of the sea is thus very intriguing! You're familiar with the saying, *Red sky at night, sailor's delight; red sky at morning, sailor take warning*. Perhaps there is a similar 'warning' in the color of the sea before God's Throne.

In chapter fifteen the saints who are saved during the Great Tribulation are on the sea and it is described as **fiery**.

I see all this as a subtle but sure indicator that the church will be home in Heaven before the seven year Tribulation.

While the church is purified by the washing of the water of the Word of God as Jesus' bride *prior* to the Great Tribulation, the Tribulation martyrs are purified *through* the fiery trials of the Tribulation.

The **sea of glass** in Heaven is solid. There is no more washing once you get there. But we're not there and can still glean from the symbolism of washing.

Bear in mind that we are washed by Jesus through His Word. He gave us the clearest example of this when He washed His own disciple's feet the night before His crucifixion.

Making the application Jesus said in John 13:10,

John 13:10 Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you."

Take a bath in their culture and your feet will still get dirty. Out in the world you would pick up dirt and defilement while walking.

It's a picture of your *spiritual* walk with Jesus. When He saves you, you are **clean**; it's like having a bath. But out in the world on a daily basis you pick up dirt and defilement and need washing.

You read about the bath you receive when you put your faith in Jesus in Titus 3:5-6,

Titus 3:5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

Titus 3:6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

How does Jesus wash your feet on a daily basis? John says in First John 1:9,

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

You're **clean** – you've been washed once-for-all; but you need continuous cleansing from the dirt and defilement that you pick up in your walk.

The application for believers today is that we are forgiven through Christ's work on the cross, but we are washed through His Word. We need to be washed daily in His Word to cleanse ourselves, so that we can serve and minister before Him.

Even though there is no Temple we can still get additional insights from what we learned about the laver and the Sea of Bronze.

When a priest entered the Temple he came first to the altar. Sacrifice preceded service to others. We might apply this in two ways:

1. Since we're talking about animal sacrifice it is a reminder that a person must be saved by the blood of Jesus as their Sacrifice before he or she can serve God.
2. Once saved you go on to live a life of greater and greater sacrifice. It's not the serving that is a sacrifice. You sacrifice in order to serve! (There's a big difference between the two).

Only the priests could wash at the Sea of Bronze. It is a reminder that we have **all** been called to be a kingdom of priests. All of us have a ministry; all of us are given a gift or gifts to accomplish ministry.

Once washed, the priest could enter the Holy Place and minister before the Lord. As he left the Holy Place he washed again before serving others. It all speaks of keeping ourselves in a place where the Lord is able to continually cleanse us. Whether we are before Him or before others we need to be cleansed!

One interesting detail about the original laver that I didn't give you. It was made from the bronze mirrors donated by the women.

Here are three mirror passages in the New Testament:

1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

James 1:23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

James 1:24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

James 1:25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

We can be changed daily by exposure to the Word as we continue in it and do it.

Might as well because soon we will be on the shore of Heaven's *sea of glass*!

