

God'S Sea Of Glass (Part 1)

Sanctify and Cleanse

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If the passenger plane that lost power in its two engines, and landed on the relatively smooth Hudson River, had instead tried to land in the ocean or in the sea, experts say that it is likely that the plane would have been torn apart by the troubled waves of the sea.

On another phenomenon of the sea, there are "rogue waves." These rogue waves are also known as "freak waves." They are huge and spontaneous ocean surface waves that can sink even the largest of ships.

It is common for mid-ocean storm waves to reach twenty-three feet in height, and in extreme conditions, such waves can reach heights of fifty feet. Several instances have been experienced in the last few years.

Scientists have finally recognized this phenomenon, as real potential disaster that can strike ships at any time. The European Union has initiated "Project MaxWave," to try to find a way to predict rogue waves and warn ships.

For centuries, maritime lore told of the existence of massive monster waves up to a hundred feet in height (approximately the height of a ten to twelve story building). Records show that these rogue waves appear without warning in both seas and oceans, against the prevailing current and wave direction, and sometimes in perfectly clear weather.

These waves sometimes consist of an almost vertical wall of water, preceded by a trough so deep that it is referred to as a "hole in the sea." A ship encountering a wave of such magnitude is usually either badly damaged or crushed, and sunk under the fifty, one hundred or more tons of water weight that crashes down on a ship. There is no telling how many ships have been lost at sea by this cause, since often the ship and all hands are lost at sea. Part of this theory extends to the Bermuda Triangle, as a possible explanation for why so many ships have gone down in that area. It is amazing, that with all of the technology, and all of the information that we have today, no one knows exactly what causes this.

No doubt, as long as there have been sailors, the reality of the dangers of the sea has been foremost in their minds. Innumerable books, poems and songs have been

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produced throughout the history of mankind, containing references to the power and danger and chaos of the sea.

Much of the imagery of "the sea" in Scripture refers either to its power, or to its danger. The sea is also among the woes that are threatened in punishment of disobedience.

It is interesting that "the sea," as used in biblical imagery, provides quite a few maritime metaphors and similes that compare the earthly sea, with chaos and destruction:

Psalm 65:7 tells us that the roar of the seas is the tumult of the peoples.

Isaiah 17:12-14 and Jeremiah 6:23 tell us that both the sea and invading armies thunder and roar.

Jeremiah 51:42 tells us that Babylon is covered with the waves of invading armies.

Jeremiah 49:23 tells us that those fearful of impending judgment are troubled like the sea.

James 1:6 explains that the doubter is like a wave of the sea tossed by the wind.

Isaiah 57:20 and Jude 13 describe that the restlessness and works of the wicked are like mud and mire tossed up by the sea.

In this light, we see the "earthly sea" as a type of perpetual unrest and chaos. However, the sea of glass, at God's throne, is in sharp contrast to this earthly turbulence. It is not a raging, chaotic swirl or wave motion.

God's throne is a visible symbol of His sovereign rule. In front of His throne is this crystal-clear sea of glass.

Revelation 4:6 Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.

The sea of glass, in front of the throne, reflects the qualities of God's throne. It is a

throne room that is holy, pure, glorious and eternal.

It is spectacularly dynamic, described in various scriptures as flaming with fire, glittering with sapphires, flashing and crashing with lightning and thunder, and dazzlingly white.

In this sermon, and the next one, I intend to expand your thinking somewhat of what it will be like for you and me as individuals, and as the church, to be on the sea of glass, before God's throne. We will be bowing before Him, singing songs, and worshipping Him, with Jesus Christ at His right hand.

Also, I want to emphasize the dramatic contrast between the biblical imagery of the earthly sea and the sea of glass in heaven.

Let us build some background understanding. Jacob was given an opportunity to see God's abiding place in vision while sleeping. He saw angels going up and down what looked like a ladder to God's throne.

Genesis 28:16-18 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it.

He anointed that stone that he slept on, and it has been handed down from generation to generation by the Israelites. It has been moved from the throne of England up into Scotland now.

Jacob does not describe any details of what he saw; just that God's place is awesome! In other words: overwhelming, grand, breathtaking, splendid, tremendous, and awe-inspiring. Since he probably saw God's throne in this vision, then it stands to reason that he saw the sea of glass, and all or most of the other glorious elements of the throne room.

Moses describes a meeting with the Lord exactly three months after the Exodus from Egypt. The Israelites entered the Desert of Sinai and camped by the mountain, Mount Sinai. This is the same as the mountain of God, also called Horeb, where God appeared to Moses in a burning bush.

In Exodus 19:3-4, God compared His delivering the people out of Egypt, across the Red Sea, and to Sinai to His carrying them on eagles' wings.

It is worth noting that when young eagles are learning to fly, the mother eagle flies under them with her wings spread out to catch them. This is the analogy used to describe what God was doing for Israel as He delivered her out of Egypt. God delivers us out of this world, and sin, with just as much care.

When the Israelites reached Mount Sinai, they were in for a demonstration of a minute amount of the power and glory of the Lord. Notice what the Israelites had to have happen to them before they were ready to meet God.

Exodus 19:10-25 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with an arrow; whether man or beast, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain." So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives." Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. And the Lord said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the Lord, and many of them perish. Also let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them." But Moses said to the Lord, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for You warned us, saying, 'Set bounds around the mountain and consecrate it.'" Then the Lord said to him, "Away! Get down and then

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come up, you and Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord, lest He break out against them." So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.

Exodus 20:1-3 And God spoke all these words, saying: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me."

So before the Israelites could come before God, He required that they wash their clothes, as verses 10 and 14 tell us. They were to be physically clean and pure. No unclean or impure thing was allowed in God's presence. They did not have God's Holy Spirit, but for us in God's church it is quite a different story. Yes, we are to be physically clean, but the spiritual cleansing is of the utmost importance.

In Exodus 19:10, the Lord instructs Moses to 'consecrate' the people; and in verse 14, we see that Moses 'sanctified' them. Consecrate and sanctify have the same basic meaning—they mean 'to set apart for a special and specific purpose.' The same Hebrew word *qadash*, is translated both consecrate and sanctify, in verses 10, 14, 22, and 23. The meaning of that Hebrew word, is 'to be clean,' 'to pronounce as clean ceremonially or morally,' 'to be holy.' That is what God expected of those Israelites before they appeared before Him, and He does us.

The Israelites were required to be clean as a condition of coming before God. How much more is expected of us, before we can bow before God on the sea of glass in front of His throne? It stands to reason that no commandment breaker—that is, a habitual commandment breaker—will stand before God on the sea of glass. Until we all have a full measure of the Holy Spirit, we slip into problems in our lives in that way.

So to come before God requires cleanliness, it requires holiness. You have heard the saying, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness." We see here why that is true. Members of God's church, the firstfruits of the kingdom, are required to be not just clean physically—not just clean on the outside, but clean spiritually of heart and mind—clean on the inside. We must be made holy by God! No human being can make something holy.

Psalms 11:4 The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.

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Therefore, God is in heaven. We do not know if the distance from us can even be stated in physical terms. But it is much closer than we realize. It is not tremendously far away as most people believe, because it is in a spiritual universe or realm, where distance has little impact.

Psalm 47:8 God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne.

His throne is holy in its excellence. Everything having to do with the throne, whether in heaven or on earth, is of the most excellent quality, workmanship, and the very best of materials are used. God's throne and throne room are not something to be considered lightly.

The temple that David envisioned, and that Solomon built, was of the most excellent and highest quality and workmanship possible for human beings to build. No building in the history of man has ever been of that level of excellence. Let us take a moment to look at an aspect of Solomon's excellent and superb temple for God.

I Kings 7:13-14 Now King Solomon sent and brought Hiram from Tyre. He was the son of a widow from the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a bronze worker; he was filled with wisdom, understanding, and skill in working with all kinds of bronze work. So he came to King Solomon and did all his work.

I 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.

The original Hebrew term for "the Sea" is *yam* [yawm]. It means "a sea" or "large body of water." The root of this word means, "to roar" [as the breaking in noisy surf].

Solomon's bronze sea has some similar characteristics to the sea of glass at God's throne. It is not totally the same, but there are certainly similarities to it. The sea greatly enlarged the basin for washing that was in the tabernacle. The sea of cast metal was a large metal basin designed to contain water (like the sea of glass), representing the forces of chaos subdued and brought to order by the Lord, who is Creator of the world. When the temple was completed, the presence of the Lord was so powerful that the priests lost even the strength to stand.

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I Kings 7:24-26 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. 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. 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.

So what we have here is—to the left of the entrance, on the south side of the court, stood the huge "molten bronze sea," and that replaced the smaller laver that had stood in the tabernacle court. The tabernacle only had the laver that served the double purpose of washing the hands and feet of the priests, as well as the parts of the sacrifices. But in the temple there were separate vessels provided for these purposes. Not only was the temple much larger than the tabernacle but also some items were actually added to that temple.

Solomon's molten sea was round and made of bronze, a handbreadth thick, with the image of lilies around the rim, and it could hold over seventeen thousand gallons of water. I have been in manufacturing plants where they have containers, or storage tanks, of twenty thousand gallons, which is close to what this is. This large basin measured fifteen feet across and was seven and a half feet high.

I Kings 7:27 He also made ten carts of bronze; four cubits was the length of each cart, four cubits its width, and three cubits its height.

I Kings 7:38-39 Then he made ten lavers of bronze; each laver contained forty baths, and each laver was four cubits. On each of the ten carts was a laver. And he put five carts on the right side of the house, and five on the left side of the house. He set the Sea on the right side of the house, toward the southeast.

The ten carts and lavers were beautifully decorated metal wagons, six feet square and four and a half feet high, with handles at each corner. Each stand could hold a basin that held two hundred and thirty gallons of water. The carts were kept in the court of the priests right next to the sanctuary, five on the north side and five on the south side. Since the carts were on wheels, they could easily be moved from place to place.

They were used for the washing and preparing of the sacrifices and for the general

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cleanliness of the temple. The dirty water could then be wheeled away and disposed of in a proper place and the basins were then refilled with clean water from the molten bronze sea.

There must have been a system for removing small amounts of water, so that the priests could wash their hands and feet. There might have been spigots at the base of the basin. Cleanliness and purity were essential in the proper worship of God. The temple was kept immaculately clean and polished. This was the physical requirement to maintain its holy stature.

If the priests did not keep their hands and feet clean as they ministered in the temple, they were in danger of death.

In Scripture, water for drinking is a picture of the Spirit of God.

John 7:37-39 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

In comparison, water for washing is a picture of the Word of God.

Psalms 119:9 How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.

John 15:3 You are already clean because of the word, which I have spoken to you.

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

As the priests labored for the Lord in the temple, they became defiled by their own sins and by the animals they handled, so they needed to be cleansed. We too can become

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defiled and need the "washing of water by the word." Jesus pictured this in John 13, when He washed the disciples' feet.

It is interesting to recognize the contrast between the sanctified church and the unclean wicked world in biblical imagery of "the sea." The wicked cannot, in and of themselves, choose to be cleansed, neither can they find peace. The sea imagery expresses it well. Isaiah contrasts this peace and calmness with a description of the wicked:

Isaiah 57:19-21 "I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near," Says the Lord, "And I will heal him." But the wicked are like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt. "There is no peace," Says my God, "for the wicked."

So we see the direct contrast between the troubled sea and peace. They are opposites. The troubled sea represents chaos and war; the sea of glass represents calm order and peace. It is a sea of glass, perfectly flat and smooth. It is interesting that the Beast, in Revelation 13:1, rises up 'out of the sea.'

Revelation 13:1 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.

"The sea," in that context, represents the Babylonian world system of politics, economics, education, and military campaigns; and symbolizes its continued threat and chaotic origin.

In fact, one of its mottos is: "Order out of Chaos." The World Government rises up out of the chaos of world crisis and confusion, and initiates what will seem like order and peace.

Babylon will seem to solve many of the world's problems temporarily, but it will bring suffering and death unlike the world has ever seen, because Satan uses this counterfeit instrument to try to destroy mankind.

We see such counterfeiting referred to in Jude 13, where wild waves of the sea, cast up their own shame like foam. This is a figurative description of false teachers who throw out their obscene teachings like wreckage on the shore.

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The vast earthly sea symbolizes the continued threat the forces of chaos and evil pose against God and creation. Job 38 and Jeremiah 5 describe the sea generally as pushing against the boundaries God established for it.

Job 38:8-11 Or who shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth and issued from the womb; when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band; when I fixed My limit for it, and set bars and doors; when I said, 'This far you may come, but no farther, and here your proud waves must stop!'

This is both literal and figurative. God sets the boundaries of the oceans and the seas, and so also He has set the boundaries for Babylon the false prophet, and the Beast power.

To enclose "the sea with doors," is a symbolical expression for restraining, fixing a boundary to it.

Jeremiah 5:22-23 Do you not fear Me?' says the Lord. 'Will you not tremble at My presence, Who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass beyond it? And though its waves toss to and fro, yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it. But this people has a defiant and rebellious heart; they have revolted and departed.

In this we see an inherent characteristic of defiance and rebelliousness in the earthly sea, and if that is not enough the sea tries to revolt and leave God's control. Here we see the symbolism of the sea representing "people [who have] a defiant and rebellious heart."

As Creator, God controls the sea, both producing and calming its waves, and keeping it within its boundaries. Nahum 3:8 mentions that God can dry up the sea at will, or unleash it to judge the world, as in the flood.

As a result, the threat of chaos and evil is ultimately hollow because God has the power and authority to control it. Jesus' symbolizes this same authority over the turbulence of the sea, calming it when His disciples became terrified. Matthew records how Jesus rebuked the winds and the sea and there was great calm.

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Matthew 8:23-27 Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

So we see here that Christ has authority over God's Creation, and when He tells it to do or not do something, it obeys. We can take heart in this, because we are in financial trouble in this world, and this nation is in many other sinful types of trouble, but God has control over His creation, and everything that goes on in it. So, we should not be "O you of little faith," but we should have great faith in what God can do to protect us from anything.

Now let us get back to things directly related to God's throne. Ezekiel saw a vision, obviously similar to the Revelation of Jesus Christ to the Apostle John. Ezekiel saw "the likeness of a firmament, shining like crystal... And above the firmament... there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire."

There is something here in Ezekiel 1 that is very unusual and important. Things in heaven are made of spiritual things, not physical things. We have spent a lot of time looking at the physical things, like Solomon's temple, and the literal sea and the waves thereof.

Ezekiel 1:3-4 The word of the Lord came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the River Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was upon him there. Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

Ezekiel 1:13-14 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches going back and forth among the living creatures. The fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning. And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance like a flash of lightning.

Ezekiel 1:20-22 Wherever the spirit wanted to go, they went, because there

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the spirit went; and the wheels were lifted together with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. When those went, these went; when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up together with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. The likeness of the firmament above the heads of the living creatures was like the color of an awesome crystal, stretched out over their heads.

There we have something like a rainbow over them like a crystal. I am pretty sure that this is not the sea of glass being described here. I mention this to show you that these things are composed of spirit. I do not want to get into the details for the description for this, because it is not applicable to the sermon.

Ezekiel 1:23-28 And under the firmament their wings spread out straight, one toward another. Each one had two which covered one side, and each one had two which covered the other side of the body. When they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of many waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a tumult like the noise of an army; and when they stood still, they let down their wings. A voice came from above the firmament that was over their heads; whenever they stood, they let down their wings. And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne [a replica of God's Throne], in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. So when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.

Then Ezekiel receives his commission, as a prophet of God, in chapter 2. He is to go to the rebellious house of Israel, and warn them to turn back to God. God says they would not listen, but they would know after the fact that a prophet of God was warning them. This vision that he saw was awesome in nature, and terrifying as well. How much greater is the actual throne of God, and the sea of glass before it? It is beyond our comprehension, I am sure.

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Ezekiel 3:12-14 Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a great thunderous voice: "Blessed is the glory of the Lord from His place!" I also heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, and a great thunderous noise. So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me.

So it seems that Ezekiel had a ride on a cherubim. This is probably very similar to what happened to Enoch when he was carried away, and Elisha when he was carried away. They were carried away to a separate place, and the chariot of God took them away.

I just wanted to point this out, so you could see that there are things made of spirit that must then be manifest to the human eyes. You cannot see these spiritual things otherwise. God uses those things according to His great pleasure, and reveals them according to His will. Very few people have seen this in vision. If any human being were to see it realistically they would melt away, or dissolve. At the presence of God that would definitely happen.

Now let us go to Isaiah 6, and see where Isaiah was also before the throne of God. No one should ever want to set himself up as a prophet. That is a key to recognizing false prophets—they all set themselves up.

Look at how Ezekiel was set up, or commissioned. Look at how Jeremiah was set up. Let us look at how Isaiah was set up. God always did it directly.

Isaiah 6:1-10 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts." Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged." Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." And He

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said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' " Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed."

So we see that Isaiah was set up by God after He cleansed and sanctified him. It seems that maybe God has closed the eyes and ears of the people of this nation, and the people of Israel around the world. There certainly is not any wisdom in what is going on.

Let us continue with something related to the throne of God. Acts 7 records the martyrdom of the first century Christian, Stephen. Stephen was a sanctified member of God's church, one of the last profound witnesses to the leaders of Judaism. In addition, in a sense, with this incident the doom of Jerusalem and the temple, and everything there, was sealed.

Acts 7:51-56 "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it." When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

So again, how close is the throne of God to the earth? We do not know. But Stephen looked up (probably in a vision) and saw it, and Christ standing at the right hand of God.

What does it mean to be at the right hand of someone? When someone is at the right hand of someone else of authority, it is a sign of honor. It represents dignity and majesty. It is the most important place of honor. Notice He was not sitting there.

Revelation 3:21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My

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throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

But when Stephen looked up unto heaven Christ was standing at the right hand of God.

So this time Christ was standing. He was standing there looking at what was going on, not just sitting viewing. He was not a passive participant in this, but active. God and Christ were thrilled and excited at Stephen's victory over sin, Satan, the world and human nature. Stephen was cleansed, sanctified and completed in preparation for God's kingdom.

He will be bowing on the sea of glass in front of God the Father, with Jesus Christ at God's right hand when all the saints appear before God following the resurrection of the firstfruits. We certainly hope that we will be there with him.

Now let us continue looking at the throne of God. Let us go to Revelation 4. What I want to do here is to look at the whole scene concerning the throne of God, and the sea of glass. When the church age is coming to a close, we see Revelation 4 in the timeline. This is, in a sense, parallel to Isaiah 6:1-3:

Revelation 4:1-5 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." Immediately I was in the Spirit [It sounds like he was experiencing this in a vision]; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

This is very similar to the account that we read earlier, about when God came down on Mt. Sinai, in Exodus 19 and 20, and brought the Ten Commandments, when there was lightning and thundering and there was the great sound of a loud trumpet.

The sea of glass at God's throne points to a fixed state of holiness, both inward and outward, and its being "before the throne," would indicate that the purity is mirrored with

the holy excellence of God and His throne.

Revelation 4:6 Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.

The crystal appearance describes the splendor and beauty of that scene of holiness, spread out before the throne. The two symbols of glass and crystal, are closely allied, but are not quite the same. Glass is a manufactured article, whereas crystal is a natural substance. There is an inherent beauty in crystal that is not found in glass.

The sea of glass is expressive of smoothness, and this sea of crystal, demonstrates that the peace of heaven is not like earthly seas, disturbed by winds, but is crystallized into an eternal peace and inherent sparkle. His throne is eternal in its quality and duration.

The glass and crystal are stationary, representing peace and calmness. The peace and calmness of the sea of glass symbolizes the absence of evil and chaos in heaven.

Revelation 4:6 Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.

Wherever the throne of God is there is a sea of glass, there is a rainbow, in the case of the cherubim this throne is a temporary moveable throne, and it goes where God goes.

Revelation 4:7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.

Revelation 4:8-11 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!" Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created."

This is tremendously encouraging for us, because we were, and are, created for God's pleasure, and we understand that salvation is creation right now in us—a spiritual creation that is taking place in us.

Ephesians 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

One spiritual blessing we are going to receive is the opportunity to be on that sea of glass, before the throne of God. That experience alone is worth it, but so many other wonderful blessings will come with it.

Therefore, we have to let God do His good pleasure in us. We have to let Him create in us the spiritual character and strength, which comes only from God, because that is why we have been called into God's church. We have been called so that we can be cleansed and prepared for His kingdom now. We are already sanctified, but we have to continue to do our part in that cleansing process. We are cleansed by the Word, which Word gives us instructions of what we should do to be righteous in His eyes. And He declares us righteous; we cannot declare ourselves righteous.

We have been placed in God's church to worship Him, and to work with Him to produce good fruit as He develops us toward the condition of perfection or completion.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Now let us go to Revelation 7, where it describes a great multitude from the Great Tribulation.

Revelation 7:9-10 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

When they are resurrected, a great multitude is standing right in front of the throne of God. When the 144,000, and the great multitude are resurrected, they come before the throne of God, and spreading out before the throne of God is the sea of glass.

Revelation 7:11-14 All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen." Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore, we see that initially, and in the ultimate sense, we can only be washed completely by the blood of the Lamb, and He is also referred to as the Word.

Revelation 7:16-17 They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

So there is the throne, the sea of glass, and everything else in the throne room. What is the reaction of humans in the presence of God? What do spirit beings do in His presence?

Revelation 11:15-16 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God,

So the Apostle John is looking again at the throne of God. Moreover, the throne of God has the sea of glass in front of it. All those who are going to be resurrected will come before the throne of God. And there is a sea of glass for us to stand or kneel on. Our

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initial reaction will be to prostrate ourselves before the glory of God. His throne is glorious in its appearance. It was awesome, as Jacob described. The power, glory and majesty of God are a very fearful thing, at first contact.

The prophet Isaiah describes his reaction to appearing before God in a vision when he received his commission as a prophet of God.

Isaiah 6:3-5 And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts."

Isaiah felt like his body was falling apart right there on the spot, and no doubt he was unable to remain standing. The effect described here is one that often occurred to those who had a vision of God.

The prophet Ezekiel describes his reaction to appearing before God in a vision.

Ezekiel 1:28 Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. So when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.

Ezekiel 2:1-2 And He said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you." Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me.

The Spirit had to pick him up, and hold him there on his feet, because his legs had become like gelatin, from fear and awe at being in the presence of God.

The prophet Daniel describes his reaction to a meeting in a vision with the Lord.

Daniel 8:15-18 Then it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, who called, and said, "Gabriel, make this man understand the

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vision." So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Understand, son of man, that the vision refers to the time of the end." Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright.

Daniel 8:27 And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king's business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it.

This fainting that he had was, at least in part, from the vision that he saw of what was going to happen on earth to man. No doubt, what he saw there was enough to make him faint, but it was still part of the reaction of having stood before the presence of the Lord.

The Apostle John describes his reaction to the appearance of "One like the Son of Man" in vision.

Revelation 1:9-17 I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man [like Christ], clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.

Whether in the presence of God the Father, or Jesus Christ, even in vision, Their power

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and glory is more than a mere human can withstand. "Woe is me, for I am undone!"—"I was afraid and fell on my face"—"I fell at His feet as dead." These are some of the reactions of those who have had the opportunity to appear before God in vision.

Revelation 11:16-18 And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth."

So all the saints have to be individually given their reward. We also know from Revelation 2 and 3 that they have to be given a new name. They have to be given the name of the Father, the name of the New Jerusalem, and they have to be given Christ's new name. All of that has to take place after the saints, the spiritual firstfruits, are resurrected.

It may be that this receiving of new names happens on the sea of glass before God's throne. I certainly expect that it will. It does not say that anywhere, but that seems like a logical place for it to happen. What an exciting ceremony that will be! Words just cannot express how awesome that will be. May we all be cleansed by the water of the Word, and do our part to be able to cleanse ourselves of our problems, and the things that we have to overcome, so that we can be, in a sense, qualified to be given that gift of salvation from God and eternal life.

That ends part one, and next time we will look a little bit closer at our responsibility with regard to the sea of glass.