

The Sea of Glass

Have you ever wondered why the words 'Sea of Glass' do not figure in Church of God literature, despite being the important destination for those who take part in the first resurrection? The answer is revealing and an embarrassment to the Church of God, as we will see.

A close examination of the book of Revelation proves that without a doubt, those who take part in the first resurrection will stand on the sea of glass in heaven before the thrones of God the Father and Jesus Christ, Revelation 15:2, *'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.'*

Those who attempt to conflate their presence there with a resurrection they believe takes place at the Feast of Trumpets, i.e. that they can only be there for less than a day before returning with Jesus Christ to stand on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4), find themselves facing contradictory evidence from the scriptures.

The closely following verses of Revelation 15 tell of their singing praises to the Lord God on the sea of glass for their triumph in Christ, over the armies of the Beast, even as God's people were first delivered, 'with an outstretched arm', Exodus 14:30-31. *'Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.'*

Learning that song in itself will take some time, but then the chapter goes on to show that the seven last plagues have not yet been poured out upon the earth, verses 6-8, *'and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever, and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.'*

Those plagues are detailed in the following chapter, Revelation 16, and it is obvious from verse 12, 14 and 16 that they occur **before** the return of Christ to fight at Armageddon, and that they obviously take place over a period of time, *'The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. ...And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.'*

Consequently, the idea that the Saints are resurrected, taken to the sea of glass and return with Christ in one day, on the Feast of Trumpets, must be dismissed, for they are obviously there before the Father's throne for a considerable period of time. The question is, how long? And why do they need to be there, in heaven?

We gain more information from Revelation 14:1-5, *'And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. 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: 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. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God. Here we see the same Saints stand on 'the mount Sion'. This is the 'mount Sion' we read of in Hebrews 12:22, *'But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.'**

We find a description of God's Throne in heaven in Revelation 4:2-6, *'At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.'*

The throne stands upon the sea of glass where the resurrected saints stand as we saw in Revelation 15:2. Revelation 14:1 reveals that the saints now have God's name upon their foreheads, *'And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.'*

Why is this? We find the answer in Revelation 19:7, *'Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.'* The resurrected saints have now become the Bride of Christ in a ceremony before God's Throne upon the sea of glass. They are now entitled to their Father-in-law's name, having become part of the fully 'born again' family of God.

These 144,000 Saints are not the same 144,000 mentioned in Revelation 7, who wash their robes *during* the Great Tribulation, Revelation 7:14, *'And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'* Most of them are unlikely to survive that very dangerous period, which they experience because they were not prepared when Christ returned for His Bride, (Matthew 25: 1-10) and needed to repent. They do repent and will be rewarded in the future on their resurrection during the *second* resurrection, as is indicated by the use of the future tense in Revelation 7:16-17, *'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'*

The Bride of Christ though, are shown to be those who were prepared, Matthew 25:10, *'And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.'* They were prepared because they looked directly to Jesus Christ and His words and example, rather than following the teachings or traditions of any men. So, in Revelation 14:4 the Greek reads *'these were bought from the men'*, and so are considered by God to be spiritual virgins. And the same verse also reveals they are truly a firstfruit offering to God, being pictured by the special offering which followed the waving of the Wavesheaf by the High Priest in Leviticus 23:13, *'And the grain offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, a food offering to the LORD with a pleasing aroma, and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin'*. This grain offering of abib [ripened] barley flour may even have been ground from the firstfruit barley sheaf itself, which represents Jesus Christ, the first of the firstfruits.

We now understand why these Saints are shown to be in Heaven before their Father's Throne upon the Sea of Glass. They are very special indeed, even amongst the firstfruits gathered from Adam until the end time, some of whom may not have qualified to become the Bride of Christ, though like their brethren in Revelation 7 they have qualified for a special role in God's Kingdom. Proverbs 31:29, *'Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.'*

After they have married Christ upon the Sea of Glass, they will return with their bridegroom to assist him at Armageddon, Revelation 19:8, 14, *'it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure'—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.....And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.'* After Christ's victory they will share rule with Him here on the earth during the millennium, Revelation 20:4, *'And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and*

for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.'

The Sea of Glass then, as we have seen, is where God the Father has His throne and where Jesus Christ is found seated upon a throne at His Father's right hand, Colossians 3:1, *'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.'*

We should also be aware that Christ has appeared on a mobile version of the Sea of Glass as we read in Ezekiel 1, where He visits the prophet Ezekiel in Babylon.

It is to this transportable Sea of Glass that the Saints are carried by the angels on their resurrection, Revelation 6:16, & Matthew 24:30-31, *'And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.'* *'And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.'* Wherever we find the throne of God it stands upon the Sea of Glass reflecting the glory of God and providing the throne room in which God's attendants and family can gather before Him.

Finally, we come to one of the main reasons why those who become the Bride of Christ need to spend time in heaven. All who make it to the Sea of Glass are overcomers as Christ repeatedly encouraged in Revelation chapters 2 & 3. However, Christ has not chosen those who are accustomed to positions of rulership - 1 Corinthians 1:26, *'For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.'*

Just as Christ taught the 12 disciples for 3 ½ years in preparation for their future roles as kings over the 12 tribes of Israel, so will those of us who qualify, be taught how to assume the positions for which we have qualified. Luke 19:17, *'And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.'* Revelation 22:12, *'And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.'*

The length of time required is brought out in Revelation 12:14, where the woman (the virgins who overcame) is nourished for 3 ½ years – *'And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.'* 'Nourished' is Strong's 5142 *trepho* – to make grow, nourish, feed. 'Word Studies' explains: '*trepho* – properly enlarge, fully develop because adequately nourished (fed) (figuratively) to bring (or experience) 'personal development', ie spiritual development ...'

The Sea of Glass then, becomes a place of education and preparation for the Saints. This same 3 ½ year period is also mentioned in Daniel 7 and 12 and coincides with the last half of Daniel's 70th week, and is the period of 3 ½ years during which the Great Tribulation occurs.

This is fulfilment of several scriptures in Revelation such as Revelation 3:10, *'Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.'* Thus the Sea of Glass is also a place of protection.

Finally, a mobile Sea of Glass will also provide transportation of Christ's heavenly armies, which will include His Bride, at their arrival with Jesus Christ upon the Mount of Olives, before their victory at Armageddon. Zechariah 14: 4-5, *'And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And you shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yes, you shall flee, like as you fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with him'*