

~MOLTEN SEA, COPPER SEA (377)

- .. Circumference
- .. Of Copper
- .. Capacity
- .. In Prophecy

- When the temple was constructed during Solomon's reign, a molten, that is, cast or poured, sea replaced the portable basin of copper used with the earlier tabernacle.
- And Yehowah spoke further to Moses, saying; (**Exodus 30:17**)
- You must make a basin of copper and its stand of copper for washing, and you must put it between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water into it. (**Exodus 30:18**)
- And Aaron and his sons must wash their hands and their feet at it. (**Exodus 30:19**)
- When they go into the tent of meeting they will wash with water that they may not die, or when they go near the altar to minister in order to make an offering made by fire smoke to Yehowah. (**Exodus 30:20**)
- And they must wash their hands and their feet that they may not die, and it must serve as a regulation to time indefinite for them, for him and his offspring throughout their generations. (**Exodus 30:21**)
- And he proceeded to make the **molten** sea ten cubits from its one brim to its other brim, circular all around, and its height was five cubits, and it took a line of thirty cubits to circle all around it. (**1 Kings 7:23**)
- And Hiram gradually made the basins and the shovels and the bowls. At length Hiram finished doing all the work that he did for King Solomon as respects the house of Yehowah. (**1 Kings 7:40**)
- And the one sea and the twelve bulls beneath the sea. (**1 Kings 7:44**)

- Built by Hiram, a Hebrew-Phoenician, it was evidently called a **sea** because of the large quantity of water it could contain. This vessel, also of copper, was ten cubits, 4.5 meters(14.6 feet) from its one brim to its other brim, circular all around, and its height was five cubits, 2.2 meters(7.3 feet), and it took a line of thirty cubits, 13.4 meters (44 feet) to circle all around it.
- And he proceeded to make the **molten** sea ten cubits from its one brim to its other brim, circular all around, and its height was five cubits, and it took a line of thirty cubits to circle all around it. (**1 Kings 7:23**)

• Circumference

- The circumference of 30 cubits is evidently a round figure, for more precisely it would be 31.4 cubits. In this regard, Christopher Wordsworth quotes a certain Rennie as making this interesting observation: **Up to the time of Archimedes, Third Century B.C.E, the circumference of a circle was always measured in straight lines by the radius, and Hiram would naturally describe the sea as thirty cubits round, measuring it, as was then invariably the practice, by its radius, or semi-diameter, of five cubits, which being applied six times round the perimeter, or brim, would give the thirty cubits stated.**
- There was evidently no intention in the passage but to give the dimensions of the Sea, in the usual language that every one would understand, measuring the circumference in the way in which all skilled workers, like Hiram, did measure circles at that time. He, of course, must however have known perfectly well, that as the polygonal hexagon thus inscribed by the radius was thirty cubits, the actual curved circumference would be somewhat more. [**Notes on the King James Version, London, 1887**]
- Thus, it appears that the ratio of three to one, that is, the circumference being three times the diameter, was a customary way of stating matters, intended to be understood as only approximate.

• Of Copper

- The **copper sea** was decorated with gourd-shaped ornaments and had as its base 12 figures of bulls, facing north, south, east, and west in groups of three. The brim of the **sea** resembled a lily blossom.

- Since the thickness of this large vessel was a handbreadth, 7.4 centimeters (2.9 inches), it may well have weighed in the neighborhood of 27 metric tons (30 tons).
- And there were gourd-shaped ornaments down below its brim all around, encircling it, ten in a cubit, enclosing the sea all around, with two rows of the gourd-shaped ornaments cast in its casting. (1 Kings 7:24)
- It was standing upon twelve bulls, three facing north, and three facing west, and three facing south, and three facing east, and the sea was above upon them, and all their hind parts were toward the center. (1 Kings 7:25)
- And its thickness was a handbreadth, and its brim was like the workmanship of the brim of a cup, a lily blossom. Two thousand bath measures were what it would contain. (1 Kings 7:26)
- This huge quantity of copper came from the supplies King David had obtained in his conquests in Syria.
- After that David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus, and the Syrians came to be David's servants bearing tribute. And Yehowah kept giving salvation to David wherever he went. (1 Chronicles 18:6)
- Moreover, David took the circular shields of gold that happened to be on the servants of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. (1 Chronicles 18:7)
- And from Tibhath and Cun, cities of Hadadezer, David took very much copper. With it Solomon made the copper sea and the pillars and the copper utensils. (1 Chronicles 18:8)
- The casting was done in a clay mold in the region of the Jordan and was indeed a remarkable feat.
- And the one sea and the twelve bulls beneath the sea. (1 Kings 7:44)
- And the cans and the shovels and the bowls and all these utensils, which Hiram made of polished copper for King Solomon for the house of Yehowah. (1 Kings 7:45)

- In the District of the Jordan it was that the king cast them in the clay mold, between Succoth and Zarethan. ([1 Kings 7:46](#))

•• Capacity

- The account at;
- And its thickness was a handbreadth, and its brim was like the workmanship of the brim of a cup, a lily blossom. Two thousand bath measures were what it would contain. ([1 Kings 7:26](#))
- Refers to the sea as containing two thousand bath measures, whereas the parallel account at;
- And its thickness was a handbreadth, and its brim was like the workmanship of the brim of a cup, a lily blossom. As a receptacle, three thousand bath measures were what it could contain. ([2 Chronicles 4:5](#))
- Speaks of it as containing three thousand bath measures. Some claim that the difference is the result of a scribal error in the Chronicles account. However, while the [Hebrew](#) verb meaning, contain, in each case is the same, there is a measure of latitude allowable in translating it. Thus some translations render;
- And its thickness was a handbreadth, and its brim was like the workmanship of the brim of a cup, a lily blossom. Two thousand bath measures were what it would contain. ([1 Kings 7:26](#))
- To read that the vessel held or would contain 2,000 bath measures, and translate;
- And its thickness was a handbreadth, and its brim was like the workmanship of the brim of a cup, a lily blossom. As a receptacle, three thousand bath measures were what it could contain. ([2 Chronicles 4:5](#))
- To read that it had a capacity of or could hold or could contain 3,000 bath measures. [AT](#), [JB](#), [NW](#)
- This allows for the understanding that the Kings account sets forth the amount of water customarily stored in the receptacle while the Chronicles account gives the actual capacity of the vessel if filled to the brim.

- There is evidence that the bath measure anciently equaled about 22 liters (5.8 gallons), so that, if kept at two thirds capacity, the sea would normally hold about 44,000 liters (11,620 gallons) of water.
- For it to have had the capacity indicated, it must not have had straight sides, but instead, the sides below the rim, or lip, must have been curved, giving the vessel a bulbous shape.
- A vessel having such a shape and having the dimensions stated earlier could contain up to 66,000 liters (17,430 gallons). Josephus, Jewish historian of the **First Century C.E**, describes the **sea** as in the shape of a hemisphere.
- He also indicates that the **seas** location was between the altar of burnt offering and the temple building, somewhat toward the south. *[Jewish Antiquities, VIII, 79, iii, 5 / VIII, 86, iii, 6]*
- In addition to the **copper sea** there were ten smaller copper basins resting on carts, and these were evidently filled from the **copper sea**.
- And he proceeded to make ten basins of copper. Forty bath measures were what each basin would contain. Each basin was four cubits. There was one basin upon each carriage for the ten carriages. (**1 Kings 7:38**)
- Then he put five carriages on the right side of the house, and five on the left side of the house, and the **sea** itself he put to the right side of the house eastward, toward the south. (**1 Kings 7:39**)
- Rabbinic tradition is that the sea was equipped with faucets. The ten basins were used for washing certain sacrifices and likely for other cleansing work, but the **sea** was for the priests to wash in it.
- Further, he made ten basins, and put five to the right and five to the left, to wash in them. Things having to do with the burnt offering they would rinse in them. But the sea was for the priests to wash in it. (**2 Chronicles 4:6**)
- Some rabbis have held that the priests completely immersed themselves in the water of the copper sea, while Josephus says it was **for the priests to wash their hands and feet in**. *[Jewish Antiquities, VIII, 87, iii, 6]*

- Whatever the procedure, the copper sea is associated with priestly cleansing.

.. In Prophecy

- This may provide a key for understanding the references in the book of Revelation to the glassy sea seen before the throne of God in the apostle John's vision.
- And before the throne there is, as it were, a **glassy sea** like crystal. And in the midst of the throne and around the throne there are four living creatures that are full of eyes in front and behind. (**Revelation 4:6**)
- And I saw what seemed to be a **glassy sea** mingled with fire, and those who come off victorious from the wild beast and from its image and from the number of its name standing by the glassy sea, having harps of God. (**Revelation 15:2**)
- It was like crystal, perhaps having transparent sides.
- Now the structure of its wall was jasper, and the city was pure gold like clear glass. (**Revelation 21:18**)
- Also, the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each one of the gates was made of one pearl. And the broad way of the city was pure gold, as transparent glass. (**Revelation 21:21**)
- So that the contents could be seen. Those standing by it, persons victorious over the wild beast and its image, correspond to those called and chosen and faithful ones described at,
- These will battle with the Lamb, but, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, the Lamb will conquer them. Also, those called and chosen and faithful with him will do so. (**Revelation 17:14**)
- And I saw thrones, and there were those who sat down on them, and power of judging was given them. Yes, I saw the souls of those executed with the ax for the witness they bore to Jesus and for speaking about God, and those who had worshiped neither the wild beast nor its image and who had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand. And they came to life and ruled as kings with the Christ for a thousand

years. (**Revelation 20:4**)

- The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. (**Revelation 20:5**)
- Happy and holy is anyone having part in the first resurrection, over these the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of the Christ, and will rule as kings with him for the thousand years. (**Revelation 20:6**)
- These serve as, priests of God and of the Christ and as kings with Christ during his Thousand Year Rule.
- But you are, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession, that you should declare abroad the excellencies, of the one that called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (**1 Peter 2:9**)
- The position of this priestly class next to the **glassy sea** before God's throne calls to mind the apostles reference to the Christian congregations being cleansed with the bath of water by means of the word.
- Husbands, continue loving your wives, just as the Christ also loved the congregation and delivered up himself for it. (**Ephesians 5:25**)
- That he might sanctify it, cleansing it with the bath of water by means of the word. (**Ephesians 5:26**)
- That he might present the congregation to himself in its splendor, not having a spot or a wrinkle or any of such things, but that it should be holy and without blemish. (**Ephesians 5:27**)
- Jesus also spoke of the cleansing power of the word of God that he proclaimed.
- You are already clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. (**John 15:3**)
- The mingling of fire.
- And I saw what seemed to be a **glassy sea mingled with fire**, and those who come off victorious from the wild beast and from its

image and from the number of its name standing by the glassy sea, having harps of God. ([Revelation 15:2](#))

- **With the watery contents of the sea undoubtedly relates to judgments of God, for fire is frequently used in this connection and God himself is described as a consuming fire toward those rejecting his divine will.**
- **See that you do not beg off from him who is speaking. For if they did not escape who begged off from him who was giving divine warning upon earth, much more shall we not if we turn away from him who speaks from the heavens. ([Hebrews 12:25](#))**
- **For our God is also a consuming fire. ([Hebrews 12:29](#))**
- **The symbolism of the **glassy sea** in John's vision thus illustrates Paul's inspired explanation that the earthly tabernacle and temple with their equipment and priestly functions served as patterns of heavenly things.**
- **If, now, he were upon earth, he would not be a priest, there being men who offer the gifts according to the Law. ([Hebrews 8:4](#))**
- **But which men are rendering sacred service in a typical representation and a shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses, when about to make the tent in completion, was given the divine command. For says he; See that you make all things after their pattern that was shown to you in the mountain. ([Hebrews 8:5](#))**
- **This very tent is an illustration for the appointed time that is now here, and in keeping with it both gifts and sacrifices are offered. However, these are not able to make the man doing sacred service perfect as respects his conscience. ([Hebrews 9:9](#))**
- **However, when Christ came as a High Priest of the good things that have come to pass, through the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ([Hebrews 9:11](#))**
- **Therefore it was necessary that the typical representations of the things in the heavens should be cleansed by these means, but the heavenly things themselves with sacrifices that are better than**

such sacrifices. ([Hebrews 9:23](#))

- For Christ entered, not into a holy place made with hands, which is a copy of the reality, but into heaven itself, now to appear before the person of God for us. ([Hebrews 9:24](#))
- For since the Law has a shadow of the good things to come, but not the very substance of the things, men can never with the same sacrifices from year to year which they offer continually make those who approach perfect. ([Hebrews 10:1](#))
- As to the significance of the figures of bulls on which the copper sea of Solomon's temple rested.

See Also BULL