

THEOPHANIES

- A. What are theophanies? A theophany is a manifestation or appearance of God to man. God-appearances. When human beings see God.
- B. Why study theophanies? For devoted followers of God who have given their lives to love and serve Him, it would be inconsistent for us to not know about these encounters with God.
1. We do not want to make up our own ideas of who God is like.
 2. Our faith is not a blind faith, but faith based in God's eternal Word.
 3. What if some of the people who pursued God had full on encounters with the Living God and lived to tell about it?
Moses (Exo. 24, 34), Isaiah (Isa. 6), Ezekiel (Ezek. 1, 10), Daniel (Dan. 7, 10), Peter (Matt. 17), John (Rev. 1, 4, 19, 21)
 4. Theophanies affect the way we think about God. This affects the way we pray and the way we live. We can pray to God as He has revealed Himself.
 - a. *A. W. Tozer (The Knowledge of the Holy): "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." "The man who comes to a right belief about God is relieved of ten thousand temporal problems."*
- C. Theophanies answer the questions: Where is God? What is He like? What is He doing?
1. We become aware of the spiritual realm where God dwells. If we pray to "Our Father in heaven," we need to understand where God is. We do not pray "to the ceiling or into the air."
 - a. One of the postures of Jesus in prayer was to look up to heaven (John 11:41; 17:1; Matt. 14:19)
 2. We begin to interact with His power, majesty. We get a much fuller understanding of God. These passages show us who God really is.
 - a. We also learn how our visible world interacts with the invisible realm of the spirit (Dan. 10).
2 Kings 6:16-17 So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." ¹⁷ And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Exodus 24:1-2, 9-18 Now He said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar.² And Moses alone shall come near the LORD, but they shall not come near; nor shall the people go up with him."

⁹ *Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel,¹⁰ and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity.¹¹ But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank.*

¹² *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them."*

¹³ *So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God.¹⁴ And he said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. Indeed, Aaron and Hur are with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them."¹⁵ Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain.*

¹⁶ *Now the glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.¹⁷ The sight of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel.*

¹⁸ *So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.*

I. MOSES SEES THE SAPPHIRE PAVEMENT

- A. What did Moses and the 73 others see? Moses described it as a sapphire pavement. They saw God's feet.

Exodus 33:20 But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live."

- B. Moses experienced a group visitation that included 74 men who worshipped and ate a covenant meal with God. They worshiped from afar and stayed in God's presence for only a brief time. Moses draws nearer to God and stays in His presence for 40 days (Ex. 24:17-18).
- C. There is progressively more revelation released to Moses, Ezekiel, and then to John. Moses was the first to receive revelation of the sea (~1500BC). Moses experienced this heavenly ocean as the supernatural gathering place of celebration and intimacy with God. He referred to it as the sapphire pavement (Ex. 24:10).

II. EZEKIEL SEES THE CRYSTAL FIRMAMENT

- A. Ezekiel received the second revelation of the Sea (~600BC). Ezekiel described it as an awesome or terrifying crystal firmament (Heb: "raqia" – expanse). Under the firmament are 4 cherubim and above the firmament, Ezekiel sees Jesus on a sapphire (blue) throne (v. 26 – 28).

Ezekiel 1:22 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.

Ezekiel 1:26-28 And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a 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.²⁷ 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.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.

III. JOHN SEES THE SEA OF GLASS

- A. John received 2 revelations of the Sea (~90 AD). He is the first to call the pavement or firmament a Sea because of its vastness. The New Jerusalem is 1500 miles cubed, so the firmament must be pretty vast like an ocean. John also saw the rainbow that Ezekiel also saw (Rev. 4:3).

Rev. 4:2, 6 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.⁶ and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.

*Rev. 15:2-3 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.³ 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,
O King of the saints!"*

- B. John later sees it as a sea of glass mingled with fire. He also sees the Sea of Glass as a gathering place like Moses saw. The saints Rev. 15 stand before God on the Sea of Glass. The first thing the saints say is, "Great and marvelous." In other words they are filled with marvel, awe and wonder.
- C. There is a river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing out from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Rev22:1-2 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

IV. OTHERS

- A. As Solomon Dedicates the Temple, they experience the fire and glory of the Lord. They bow their faces to the ground and worship on the pavement (Heb: “ritspah” - live coal, pavement).

2 Chronicles 7:1-3 When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. ² And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house. ³ When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshiped and praised the LORD, saying: "For He is good, For His mercy endures forever."

- B. It is possible that these verses also speak of the sea of glass:

Gen 1:7 Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so.

*Psa. 104:3 He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters,
Who makes the clouds His chariot,
Who walks on the wings of the wind,*

Psa. 148:4 Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, And you waters above the heavens!

V. WHY STUDY THE SEA OF GLASS?

- A. We are going to stand on this sea of glass.
1. We will have resurrected bodies that are receptive to all that occurs on the sea: The sights, sounds, fragrances... The terrifying, sparkling, awesome crystal fire and glory will penetrate our spirit and body. The heights of joy and glory on that Sea will be amazing. Humanity will reach the heights of joy and glory on that sea.
 2. We will be filled with marvel, awe and wonder. There is a specific relationship between the people on the sapphire Sea and the human king seated on the sapphire Throne.
- B. What God put around His throne expresses His beauty to creation. The Sea is before the Throne probably on all sides. There is a vast ocean of beauty that sparkles like a diamond. It is a crystal sapphire sea with deep blue color radiating through it. It is terrifying and amazing in its radiant splendor. It is probably hundreds of miles in each direction and extends beyond what the eye can see.
- C. We will receive strength to persevere. John was given the revelation of the sea of glass to strengthen the perseverance of the martyrs. When we see the glory of the city to come, the New Jerusalem, the things of this earth “grow strangely dim.” We gain courage with we see our personal destiny related to this Sea.