

The New Jerusalem had a Great, High Wall with Twelve Gates

21: 11-21

DIG: Why will heaven need a great high wall? What is the significance of having the names of the twelve apostles as the twelve foundations and the twelve tribes of Isra'el on the twelve gates of the Holy City?

REFLECT: When you think of this scene, what comes to your mind? Can you imagine yourself there? Why or why not? Will it be worth the trials of this life?

Human language is inadequate to really describe the unimaginable splendor of the believers' eternal home. However, some do not take the language of the Bible at face value. They seek some hidden meaning behind **John's** description. But if the words do not mean what they say, who has the authority to say what they mean? Abandoning the literal meaning of these verses only leads to groundless and futile speculation. The truth about heaven is more than described here, but certainly not less than what is described here. It is a real, physical, material creation, yet so unique as to be unimaginable to us. The inspired words of **John** provide us with all the detail we need to excite our hope.⁴⁸⁹

As tenuous as our earthly **citizenship** is, our ultimate **citizenship is in heaven**. Sha'ul said it this way: **But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body (Philippians 3:20-21).**

It is little wonder that citizens of this world feel so insecure. Stress is a leading cause of physical illness. More money is spent on the temporary cures for anxiety than on any other consumer need. We mask our pain with prescription drugs or the escapes of alcohol, drugs, sex and food. Many people realize those habits are destructive, so they devote their lives to the preservation and glorification of their physical bodies.

Our hope doesn't lie in a false assurance that we will never die; rather, our hope lies in the Resurrection. **Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as His children, and the redemption**

of our bodies. For in this hope we are saved (Ro 8:23-24a). If we only have the security of this world, we would have little hope, but our citizenship is in heaven. We are subject to a different King, whose Kingdom is not of this world, and as such, we will live in a Holy City.

The Holy City will be like no other city. The greatest of all human cities had been mighty Babylon the Great, dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls (17:4). The New Jerusalem, on the other hand, will shine with the Shechinah glory of God, and its brilliance will be like that of a very precious jewel that will look like jasper, clear as crystal (21:11). The word jasper in ancient times was not limited to the type of stone we call jasper today, but describes a translucent stone. Thus, the New Jerusalem is pictured as a huge, flawless diamond, refracting the Shechinah glory, or the visible manifestation of God, throughout the new heaven and the new earth.

This will be the same Shechinah glory that filled the Tabernacle in the wilderness (Exodus 40:34), and the Temple of Solomon (2 Chronicles 5:14). When the Lord Jesus had tabernacled among us, the glory of God was visible in a different sense, and we have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). In heaven, the Tabernacle of God, Yeshua Messiah, is finally dwelling with men (21:3), and His Shechinah glory will illuminate the New Jerusalem forever more.

It had a great, high wall emphasizing its security, with twelve gates. The millennial Temple had the same configuration (Ezeki'el 48:31-34). Although their dimensions are not given, it is likely that each gate extends to the top of the high wall. Unlike earthly cities, however, the wall is not for protection from enemies, for its gates are always open and there are no enemies to fear. It undoubtedly speaks of strength and eternal security, but perhaps most of all it is a structure of incomparable beauty.⁴⁹⁰ No details are given about the size or height of the wall at this point.

On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Isra'el (21:12). This will be the same as the millennial Temple (Ezeki'el 48:31-34). Those who believe in "Replacement Theology," (who believe that all of ADONAI's promises to Isra'el have been forfeited by her and given to the Church) have a tough time with this verse. For all eternity the twelve tribes of Isra'el will be remembered. The LORD has not replaced Isra'el with the Church. These gates will be an eternal reminder that it was through the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Isra'el, with the twelve sons of Isra'el that the Gentiles first entered into the great family and City of God.

Furthermore, continually standing watch at the twelve gates will be twelve of ADONAI's holy angels (21:12a). These will not be guardian angels, since there will be no more need for protection. They will be ministering spirits, serving those who will inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:14), entering or leaving the City of the living God. Since there will be thousands upon thousands of angels (Hebrews 12:22b), it seems that there will be a rotation of angels assigned to these heavenly gates. Each ready to go and serve wherever and whenever needed.⁴⁹¹

There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west (21:13). Everything in eternity will face in toward the New Jerusalem, for the LORD will be there. On each gate is the name of one of the tribes of Isra'el. This is very striking and suggests the order that the children of Isra'el camped around the Tabernacle in the wilderness wanderings (see my commentary on Exodus Ep - The Camp of the Twelve Tribes of Israel).⁴⁹²

The wall of the city will have twelve foundations emphasizing its permanence. Each foundation will have the name of one the twelve apostles of the Lamb on it (21:14). Satan tries to copy everything ADONAI does. This explains why the rebuilt city of Babylon will have the names of blasphemy (17:3) written on it. But in contrast to the names of blasphemy, the names of the twelve apostles will be remembered for all eternity. This is important because the Bible tells us that God's household will be build on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19b-20).⁴⁹³

The number twelve is prominent in the New Jerusalem with twelve gates and twelve angels standing watch over them (21:12), twelve tribes of Isra'el (21:12), twelve foundations (21:14), twelve apostles (21:14), twelve pearls (21:21), twelve different kinds of fruit (22:2), with a wall 144 cubits thick, or twelve times twelve (21:16-17), and the height, length and width of the Holy City being 12,000 stadia.⁴⁹⁴ Twelve, like the number seven seems to represent completeness of the Lord's plan.

The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of God to measure the city, its gates and its walls (21:15). The measurements of the City emphasize its spaciousness. The City was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. To impress upon John the tremendous dimensions of the city, the angel actually measured the city himself with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, about 1,500 miles or 2,200 kilometers, and as wide and as high as it is long (21:16). A similar reed, although not gold, was used to measure the Tribulation temple (11:1). In both cases the measuring process points to

judgment. In the case of the apostate Tribulation Temple, it and its worshipers failed to measure up to **God's** standards and its dimensions were not even recorded. Yet, with the heavenly **City** all the dimensions are measured and meticulously recorded, satisfying **ADONAI's** highest standards of perfection. The fact that its dimensions are to be measured tells us that it is a real place and not an allegory.

There has never been a city like this one. **Using these measurements, there would be enough room for 3,375,000,000 people, each with one cubic mile. He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits, or about 216 feet or 65 meters high, by man's measurement, which the angel was using (21:17).** That's the height of a twenty-story building. **This City would stretch from about the eastern seaboard of the United States to the Mississippi River on one side, and from the Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico on the other.**⁴⁹⁵

The dimensions of **the wall** are amazing; however, the material they are made of is even more amazing. **The wall was made of transparent jasper, and the entire cubed City will be made of pure gold, as clear as glass (21:18).** The gold in heaven is so flawless that, like **the jasper stone**, it is crystal clear. The words **pure** and **clear** in are actually the same Greek word, *katharos*, pointing to the flawless perfection of the materials used to construct **the heavenly Jerusalem**. People will be able to see through it into **the Holy City**, and the Shechinah glory will radiate out through it.

There are **twelve** different stones for **the twelve foundations**. These foundations do not rest beneath the ground like **foundations** normally do, but were visible to all because each foundation is inscribed with the name of one of the **twelve apostles (21:14)**. **The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone (Isaiah 54:11-12).** **The first foundation was a Jasper, a translucent stone like a diamond, the second a clear blue sapphire, the third a greenish chalcedony, the fourth a bright green emerald, the fifth a reddish white sardonyx, the sixth fiery red sardis, the seventh a golden yellow chrysolite, the eighth an aqua green beryl, the ninth a transparent greenish yellow topaz, the tenth a golden green chrysoprase, the eleventh a violet jacinth, and the twelfth a purple amethyst (21:19-20).** There is no way of knowing which **stone** goes with each apostle. In the same way, there is no apparent correlation with the order of **the stones** in the breastpiece of the high priest (**Exodus 28:17-20**), or **the stones** in the heavenly garden (**Ezekiel 28:13**), to these **stones**. The purpose of **John's** description is to help us try to understand the indescribable beauty of **the New Jerusalem**.

The great street of the City is a mystery. Will this **City**, with a circumference of 1,500 miles long, 1,500 miles wide and 1,500 miles high have only one street? Or will one of the streets be called **the great street**? We simply don't know. But what we do know is that it will be made of **pure gold, like transparent glass (21:21)**.⁴⁹⁶ All this goes to show that the new heaven and the new earth and **the New Jerusalem** are beautiful, valuable, wondrous and glorious beyond anything we can know or imagine.⁴⁹⁷

The Holy City will have **twelve gates** made of **twelve pearls**. Each gate is made of a **single** gigantic **pearl** and seems to reach to the top of the twenty-story **jasper wall**. These **gates** are never closed (**21:25**), so they are really huge holes in **the jasper wall**. But in each open doorway there is one magnificent flawless **pearl**. How appropriate! All other precious gems are metals or **stones**, but a **pearl** is a gem formed within the oyster - the only one formed by living flesh. The humble oyster receives an irritation or wound, and around the offending object that has hurt it, it builds a **pearl**. It grows out of pain, suffering and finally death. The **pearl**, we might say, is the answer of the oyster to that which injured it. **The heavenly Jerusalem** is **ADONAI's** answer, in **Christ**, to the wicked men who crucified and ridiculed **Him**. How like **God** to make **the gates** of **the New Jerusalem** out of **pearl**. As believers come and go they will be forever reminded, as they pass through the **gates**, that access to heaven is only because of the cross and the great suffering of **the Messiah**. **His** response to those who beat and tortured **Him** was to invite them to share **His** home.⁴⁹⁸

*Dear heavenly **Father**, I thank **You** for my citizenship in heaven. Forgive me for the times that I have sought my security in this world and lived as though I have no eternal relationship with **You**. I renounce the lies of Satan that my only citizenship is on earth and not in heaven. I now claim my rights and responsibilities as a citizen of heaven and declare to **You** to be my **King**. I commit myself to be **Your** servant and do **Your** will on earth as it is being done in heaven. My hope is not in this present world but in the one to come. I will seek to live a responsibly so that by **Your** grace, the world may see **Your** reflection in me and thereby glorify **You** - **My King**. In **Yeshua's** precious name I pray. Amen.*