

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

A0644 – October 29, 2006 – Rev 21:9-21 – The New Jerusalem

Now that we have discovered the inhabitants of the city as those who overcome and those who will live outside the city on the new earth as those believers who were disinherited, now we turn to the city itself embodied with the overcomers of both Israel and the Church. What will the city look like?

Revelation 21:9 And one of the seven angels having (PAPart) the seven bowls filling (PAPart) the seven last plagues came (3SAAI) and spoke (3SAAI) with me saying (PAPart), “Come here, I will show (1SFAI) you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”

And one of the seven angels having the seven bowls filling the seven last plagues came. One of the seven angels who poured out one of the seven bowls, we know not which bowl he poured out, whether it be the one who poured out his bowl on the earth, (16:2), the sea (16:3), the rivers and springs (16:4), the sun (16:8), the beasts kingdom (16:10), the Euphrates (16:12), or the air (16:17). What we do know is that one of these seven angels made a similar announcement in

Revelation 17:1-2 “Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, ² with whom the kings of the earth committed *acts of* immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality.” And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.

Here possibly the same angel tells John

Revelation 21:9-11 “Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.

There are many comparisons and contrasts between the announcement in Rev 17:1-2 and the one in Rev 21:9-11.

Babylon (17:1-2)	New Jerusalem (21:9-11)
One of 7 angels with 7 bowls	One of 7 angels with 7 bowls
“Come here, I will show you”	“Come here, I will show you”
City is a harlot	City is a bride-wife
John carried away in spirit	John carried away in spirit
Earthly	Heavenly
Immoral	Holy
To a wilderness	To a high mountain
Center of false worship	Center of true worship
Having seven heads and ten horns	Having the glory of God

What John sees is an actual **city** but it is also a **bride, a wife**. Some commentators try to claim it is only a group of people John sees but the description that follows is clearly that of a city which houses the **bride, the wife of the Lamb**. In the OT, Israel was the **wife** of YHWH. In the NT, the Church is the **bride** of Christ. It seems that representatives from both Israel and the Church are dwelling within the **city**. That is, overcomers from Israel and the Church are in the new Jerusalem.

I. The General Picture of the City (21:10-12)

Revelation 21:10 And he carried me away in spirit to a great and high mountain, and he showed (3SAAI) me the holy city Jerusalem coming down (PAPart) out of heaven from God

Revelation 21:11 having (PAPart) the glory of God, her brilliance like a precious stone as a jasper stone clear as crystal (PaPart).

And he carried me away in spirit, this is John's human **spirit**, not the Holy Spirit. His human body was left on the isle of Patmos and taken **to a great and high mountain** to see this vision. The same thing happened in Rev 1:10; 4:2; and 17:3. When John was separated from his sinful body the perceptive abilities of his regenerate human spirit were heightened so he could perceive the wonder of the vision (Rev 22:8). This time John is taken **to a great and high mountain**. The **mountain** is not named but it may be the Mount of Transfiguration. Debate surrounds the identification of the Mount of Transfiguration but it is most likely the highest mountain in Israel, Mount Hermon. When the snow melts on Mount Hermon the waters funnel and form the Jordan River. Possibly John's spirit was taken to Mount Hermon in the year 96AD to see this magnificent vision. And what the angel **showed** John was **the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God**. The city was described almost exactly the same way in Rev 21:2. The verses are speaking of the same city. This new Jerusalem is **holy** in contrast to the old Jerusalem which was sinful. It is the city that Abraham knew about and went looking for almost 4,000 years ago. Abraham went looking for a city which had foundations (plural) and whose architect and builder was God (Heb 11:8-16). Paul knew of its existence when he said "Jerusalem above is free" (Gal 4:27). While the city was built long before Christ it was not prepared for the overcomers until He ascended to heaven. Jesus said "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also" (John 14:2-3). At last, here is the city, prepared with many dwelling places **coming down out of heaven from God**. The city's origin is heaven, its builder and architect are God. Jesus Christ has prepared the dwelling places in the holy city for the overcomers of both Israel and the Church.

In verse 11 the city is illuminated by **the glory of God**, that is, the Shechinah Glory, the visible manifestation of the essence of God. God's presence is in this city and the illumination of His splendor radiates. **Her brilliance is like a precious stone**. The light which radiates from God brilliantly illuminates the city and all who dwell within her as it illuminated

the face of Moses in the OT. The **brilliance** is likened to a **precious stone** called **jasper** that is **crystal-clear**. We are not sure what color the **jasper** stone was in John's day. What we can be certain of is that it has the clarity of a perfect diamond. The city will be beyond our greatest expectations and has no exact parallel in this world because it is built by God with the choicest materials. So, the outer walls of the city are crystal clear like a diamond and the glory of God radiates through them to furnish light for the entire new heaven and new earth.

Revelation 21:12 Having (PAPart) great and high walls, having (PAPart) twelve gates and at the gates twelve angels and names having been written (PerfPPart), which are (3SPA) [the names] of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.

The city has **great and high walls**, we will find out how great and how high in a moment. Why does the city have walls since there are no sinners, no sin, no enemies? What purpose do the walls serve? Walls in fortresses like this were always built to help defend the city and provide protection from enemies. If there are no enemies in the new heaven and new earth then why are they present? Okay, most commentators fudge a lot at this point and depart from the literal meaning of the text. They say something catchy like it symbolizes "eternal security". I'm going to take a stab at this. I could be wrong but one thing theologians are responsible to do each generation is stand on the shoulders of their predecessors and advance our understanding. My suggestion is that there will be people who do not have the right to enter the city. That's the only reason that makes sense of the **great and high walls** and the fact that **twelve angels** are stationed at the **twelve gates**. This is similar to the scene in the garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve were cast out, God stationed angels (*cherubim*) at the entrance into the garden so they could not have access to the tree of life. They were kept out because they were sinful. There won't be any sinners in the new heaven and new earth so that can't be the reason people are kept out. I suggest it is because entrance into the city and access to the tree of life are rewards for the overcomers. To see this turn over to Rev 22:12ff.

Revelation 22:12-15 "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me [the context is rewards], to render to every man according to what he has done. ¹³ "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the

last, the beginning and the end.”¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes [one washes his robes by doing good deeds. Many believers at Sardis had soiled their robes and needed to do good deeds so their robes would be white] so that they may have the right to the tree of life [the tree of life is a reward for overcomers, Rev 2:7], and may enter by the gates into the city [since the tree of life is inside the city anyone outside who has access to the city must pass through the gates].¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying [this list is very similar to the one in 21:8 and though these people have eternal life they will not have access to the city. The verse says they will be “outside” and it is obviously speaking with reference to the city. The tree of life is not necessary to sustain those who have eternal life. It is a reward.]

As Donald G Barnhouse said,

“Some have said that eating from the tree of life was the equivalent of receiving eternal life, but this is most evidently a false interpretation. Eternal life is the prerequisite for membership in the true Church. Eating of the tree of life is a reward that shall be given to the overcomer in addition to his salvation...He receives over and above his entrance into eternal life, a place in the Heavens in the midst of the paradise of God.”ⁱ

So, the purpose of the walls seems to be in line with the normal purpose of walls, to keep some believers out. If the life of a believer from Israel or the Church was characterized by anything in this list then they will not be allowed to enter the city. They must remain outside. The **walls** are designed to ensure that they remain outside. This also explains why **twelve angels** are stationed at the **twelve gates**. Again, commentators fudge at this point saying something like the angels stand there to adorn the city or we don't know why but there is some purpose. I'm suggesting that their purpose is to regulate who enters the city. They are watchmen. It seems to be the clear teaching of Rev 22:15 that certain people will not have admittance to the city and the walls and angels are there for this purpose. So, keep in mind that these people who must remain outside will have resurrection bodies. They have eternal life. They will not need the tree of life to sustain their life. They

are not going to be sinning at this time, they are not going to be crying or mourning. They are not kept out because they are sinful in the new heaven and new earth. They are kept outside because during their Christian lives on earth they persevered in these sins and were disinherited at the judgment seat of Christ more than a thousand years ago. Entering the city by the gates and eating of the tree of life are rewards for faithful perseverance in obedience and these believers from Israel and the Church persevered in this list of sins. Therefore they cannot enter because they persistently lived their life in the flesh.

The city also has **twelve gates**, these are actually **gate-towers**, huge towers carved out of pearls. Massive entryways into the city and **twelve** of them. People who live inside the city may go outside and clearly the nations and the kings of the nations can go in and out of the city (Rev 21:24-26). We will identify them a bit later. On each **gate** a **name of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel** is written. This indicates two things. First, Israel will remain a distinct entity for all eternity. Second, the city houses the overcomers from Israel. Thus, one of the **names of the twelve tribes of Israel** is written on each of the **gates**. There are nineteen different lists of the twelve tribes of Israel and we are not told which list is used for the gates, though it is often suggested that it follows the list in Ezek 48:31-34 that list refers to the gates of the Millennial Jerusalem. We will have to wait and see which list and which gate each of the **twelve tribes** names are written on.

A. The 12 Gates of the City and the 12 Foundations of the City (21:13-14)

Revelation 21:13 From east gates three and from north gates three and from south gates three and from west gates three.

There are twelve **gate-towers** in all, three on each side. Each one has the name of one of the tribes of Israel written on it. We don't know which tribes names will be written on each side though there have been suggestions. We know from this verse that when we get to the new earth it will be sitting on the new earth in perfect harmony with the compass. One wall facing due **east**, another due **north**, another due **south** and the last due **west**. There is perfect symmetry in the new heaven and new earth.

Revelation 21:14 and the wall of the city having (PAPart) twelve foundations and upon them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

the wall of the city has twelve foundations. We find out in a moment that these walls are **one hundred forty-four Roman cubits** which equals 210 US survey feet, very thick walls, almost unimaginable. I'm not aware of any walls that were that thick. The thickest walls I'm aware of were Ur-nammu's city walls at Ur (now Muqayyar, Iraq). These walls were 27-m (88-ft) thick and made of mud bricks. They were destroyed by the Elamites. The walls of the new Jerusalem will be $2\frac{1}{2}$ times thicker, so, of course, they will need several **foundations, twelve** to be exact. Apparently Abraham, 4,000 years ago knew that the city had multiple foundations. He "was looking for the city which had foundations" (plural) (Heb 11:10) though he did not know how many there were.

The layout of the twelve foundation stones is difficult to imagine. Try to fit twelve foundation stones in a square. It's a difficult problem. You can get one, two, four, nine and sixteen, these are all squares of real numbers but its difficult to get twelve. They may be just under the walls or they may extend all the way to the center of the city. It's difficult to find a layout that works. I came up with the following configuration. Below is an aerial view of a possible configuration of the **twelve foundations**. Others have suggested that they are stacked in twelve layers but this doesn't seem to be correct.

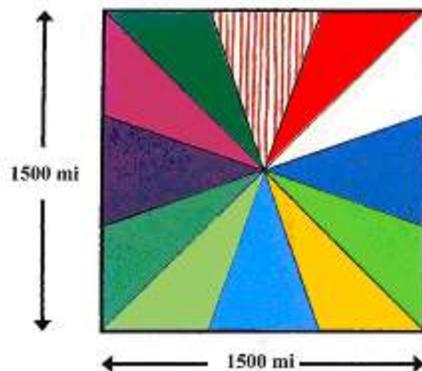


Figure 1: Aerial view of the twelve foundation stones.

**B. The Dimensions of the City and the Thickness of the Walls
(21:15-17)**

Revelation 21:15 And the one speaking (PAPart) with me had (3SIAD) a gold measuring reed, that may measure (3SAAS) the city and her gates and her walls.

Revelation 21:16 And the city is laid (3SPPI) in a square and her length as long as [even] the width. And he measured (3SAAI) the city with the reed at twelve thousand furlongs, her length and width and height are equal.

Revelation 21:17 And he measured (3SAAI) her walls one hundred forty-four cubits (216 Roman Feet or 209.7 US Survey Feet), a measure of man, is (3SPAI) of angel.

Considering the 1,500 mile dimensions of the city these stones would be of immense size. We are not told how thick they are but they are sufficient for sustaining the weight of a wall with length of 1,500 miles, height of 1,500 miles and width of 70 yards (0.0397 mi) for a total volume of ~89,488 cubic miles. The substance of the wall that makes up this volume and sits on these foundation stones is jasper. So, it's a lot of weight that has to be supported. An engineering nightmare. Nothing could move stones of such weight except an omnipotent God. The largest stone used in construction in our world is a foundation stone under the Temple Mount which was placed there by Herod and weighs 570 tons (~1,140,000 lbs.). Even this large stone is no comparison to these **twelve foundation** stones. There is no mention of a roof on the city. It may be completely open. Nothing could scale a 1,500 mile wall of jasper anyway.

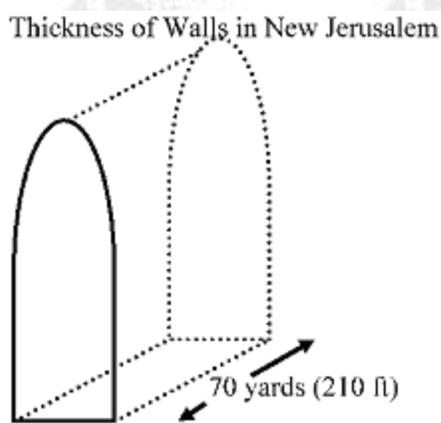
And the one speaking with me, that is, one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls (21:9), **had a gold measuring reed**, a reed was used to measure things, and so here **that he may measure the city and her gates and her walls**. So, the angel will carry out the **measuring** with this **gold measuring reed**. He reveals the measurements of **the city and her walls** but not **her gates**.

Verse 16, **the city is laid in a square**, a perfect cube, **her length as long as the width** and we find at the end of the verse that the **height is equal**. So, we are talking about a perfect cube though some have preferred a

pyramid. I prefer a cube because the holy of holies in Solomon's Temple was a perfect cube (1 Kings 6:20). This, is a very large city. The Greek text reads **twelve thousand furlongs** the equivalent today of 1,500 US Survey Miles. This is very large. No city has ever been this large. A city larger than half the United States. The 1,500 mile length of one wall of the city goes from Fredericksburg to New York City.

The extraordinary size is required to house the overcomers from Israel and the Church and to have all its amenities such as the tree of life and the river and the throne of God and the Lamb.

Verse 17, **and he**, that is the angel, **measured her walls**. The text keeps referring to the city as a **her** and that's because it's a bride-city, a city yes, but inhabited by people too, a people who during their sanctification were made pure by a life of obedience. So, **her walls** were **one hundred and forty-four cubits**, that is, ~210 US Survey Feet or about 70 yards. It doesn't tell us whether this is how tall the wall is or how thick but that wouldn't be very tall. The city is 1,500 miles tall. It seems much more likely that this is the thickness of the **walls**. So, you can imagine walking through the gates into the city and having to walk for 70 yards just to get through the gate. These walls are impregnable, marvelous and composed of the crystal-clear stone jasper and the glory of God radiates through the walls and illuminates the entire heaven and earth.



The text is very clear to point out that though the city and the walls were measured by an angel they are **the measure of man**, so that the text is attempting to be very literal and straightforward. This explanation is reason enough for concluding that the city is not just people but an actual

architectural structure. The measuring was done by **an angel** but it was done for **man** so that we could get an idea of the immensity of the city and her impregnable walls, a city designed to be inhabited by overcomers of Israel and the Church (the volume of which is 1,125,000,000 cubic miles).

C. The Foundations of the Wall (21:18-20)

Revelation 21:18 And the foundation of her wall jasper and the city gold, pure like clean glass.

The dominant appearance of the city is **gold, like pure clean glass**. This is pure gold, nothing like it in all creation now. It's so pure it's transparent.

Revelation 21:19 The foundations of the wall of the city all having been adorned (PerfPPart) precious stone, the first foundation jasper (various colors opaque), the second sapphire (blue), the third chalcedony (milky or grey), the fourth emerald (green),

Revelation 21:20 the fifth sardonyx (various), the sixth sardius (carnelian red), the seventh chrysolite (yellow topaz more valuable than other topazes), the eighth beryl (green or bluish green), the ninth topaz (yellow?), the tenth chrysoprase (green quartz), the eleventh hyacinth (blue?), the twelfth amethyst (purple),

Now, some commentators say that each foundation only has **precious stones** adorning the visible portion of the foundation and not that each foundation is a **precious stone**. That doesn't fit the Greek text. The Greek indicates that each foundation is an adorned precious stone so that the foundation itself is a precious stone and this may be adorned with other things on the visible face of it.

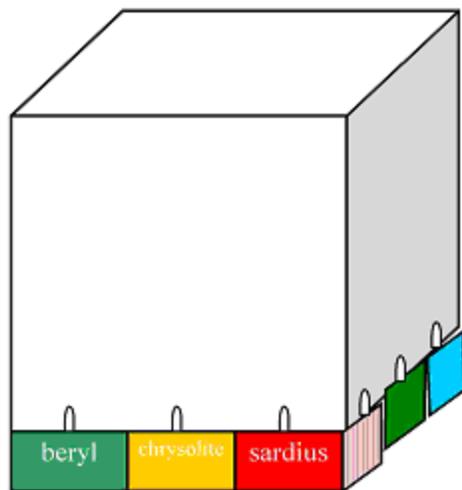
Returning to the twelve foundations, laid out as we described above, each stone is a different precious stone.

The precious stones once again remind us of the Genesis narrative where precious stones are mentioned (Gen 2:11-12). It also reminds us of the garments Lucifer wore in the Garden of Eden before he fell which are

described in Ezek 28:13-14. They were made almost like armor and of all kinds of precious stones, some of which are mentioned here as making up the foundation stones (e.g. topaz, beryl, jasper, and emerald). Several of the stones also remind us of the stones placed in the Ephod, a garment worn by the priests of Israel and described in Exod 28:17-21 (such as topaz, emerald, jacinth, amethyst, beryl, jasper).ⁱⁱ

Each stone in the Ephod represented one of the twelve tribes of Israel but here each foundation stone represents one of the twelve apostles and so stand for the Church.

As you can see in the diagram below each gate tower stands over one of the twelve foundation stones.



Okay, now let me at least give you the best description I can of each color of stone mentioned here as making up the twelve foundation stones and we'll look at some stones. See the following website for a list of gems that you can look at (<http://www.gemhut.com/gemidx.htm>).

Precious Stone	Color	Tribe
Jasper	White (perhaps green)	Benjamin
Sapphire	Blue/Sky-blue flecked with gold	Issachar
Chalcedony	Green Silicate of copper	
Emerald	Green	Simeon or Judah

Sardonyx	White with layers of red in planes	Joseph
Sardius/Carnelian	Red	Levi or Reuben
Chrysolite	Golden	Asher
Beryl	Blue/Sea-Green	
Topaz	Golden-Green	Dan
Chrysoprase	Translucent Golden-Green	
Hyacinth (Jacinth)	Violet	
Amethyst	Violet and Purple	

D. The Gates and the Streets (21:21)

Revelation 21:21 and the twelve gates twelve pearls, each one of the gates was (3SIAI) from one pearl. And the wide, clean, city pure as transparent glass.

Each gate and again, these are **gate-towers**. Each **gate-tower** is carved out of a single **pearl**. Pearls were highly valued in the ancient world for one basic reason. No improvements could be made by human beings. Humans cut diamonds and other precious stones but if a human messes with a pearl it almost always has negative results. A pearl left untouched is a priceless item. However, since the word for **gates** here is *pulon* it refers to a gate-tower or a gateway. The pearls are not swinging on hinges. The gate-tower or gateway is carved out of a single pearl. There is no such thing as a swinging gate on the gate-towers. It is an open gateway and it is the gateway that is carved out of a single pearl. Rather than a swinging or hinged gate there are angels standing guard at the gateways as watchmen.

And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. This describes the **street** in the new Jerusalem. There is one street but it does turn and go to each gate-tower. It is very wide or broad to accommodate many people walking into or out of the city. It is composed of **pure gold**, that is, its appearance is as transparent as **glass**. There is no gold so pure in this creation. Overcomers and the nations will walk on this translucent gold surface wherever they go in the city.

Everything in the city is pure and of the most majestic and splendid materials. The followers of the beast and the false religious system tried to create a heavenly city on earth in Babylon (Rev 18) but the finest materials are reserved for the perfect city and its inhabitants, the overcomers of Israel and the Church, in the new Jerusalem (Rev 21-22).

ⁱ Donald G. Barnhouse, *Revelation: An Expository Commentary*, 43-44.

ⁱⁱ Researchers at the Temple Institute have concluded that the following stones represent the following tribes and have the following colors. Ruby - Reuben – Red; Jade - Shimon – Green; Agate - Levi - Red, White, and Black Striped; Carbuncle - Judah - Bluish-Green; Lapis-Lazuli - Issachar – Blue; Quartz Crystal - Zebulun – Clear; Turquoise - Dan – Blue; Amethyst - Naftali – Purple; Agate - Gad – Grey; Aquamarine - Asher - Blue-Green; Onyx - Joseph – Black; Opal - Benjamin - A Stone Possessing All the Colors

[Back To The Top](#)

Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2006