

Rev 21:9-11 (NIV)

- 1) One of the angels that had poured out the seven bowls takes John away to a high mountain vantage point (in the Spirit of course) and opens to him the most wonderful vision of his entire experience.
 - a) He is to be shown all those who now make up the bride of Christ – the church.
 - b) But first, he is to be shown their dwelling place – the mansions that Christ had promised before he departed this earth.
- 2) As with much of what we have studied to this point, these descriptions are not to be taken literally.
- 3) That does not, however, diminish in any way the glory or the magnitude of what John is describing.
- 4) As we discussed a bit ago, we will never be able to comprehend completely the magnificence and sheer beauty of our new home until we are there.
- 5) The grand reveal will be far more exciting than any HGTV reveal you have ever seen.
 - a) We obviously won't take God's name in vein as those who see the reveals on HGTV but, we will be awed and amazed none the less.
- 6) One thing about the HGTV reveals, some of them have very little of the homeowners original furnishings in them.
 - a) They are "staged" to look like the designer desires which makes them fantastic.
 - b) I often wonder how the home will look when that is all replaced with the furniture etc. that the homeowner has.
 - c) In the case of heaven, that will not be a problem – everything we see is provided by and designed by God and we will not have to deal with any of our old, outdated furnishings.
 - d) Everything including ourselves will be NEW and WONDERFUL!
 - e) The only thing we will keep is the "good old stuff."
- 7) The first point the angel makes in his description is heaven's brilliance.
- 8) The city is the throne and dwelling place of God, so he fills every part of it with his glory.
 - a) In fact, his glory will fill the entire universe at this point.
- 9) John MacArthur comments

"Heaven's capital city is thus pictured as a huge, flawless diamond, refracting the brilliant, blazing glory of God throughout the new heaven and the new earth."

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Continuing in verse 12 we read ...

Rev 21:12-17 (NIV)

- 1) First, of note here is that the new Jerusalem (**heaven**) appears not to be some nebulous cloud like place floating in a bright shapeless universe – it is physical with dimensions and unique and describable parts.
- 2) There are 12 gates, symmetrically laid out around the 4 walls of the city.
- 3) The fact that they are named for the 12 tribes of Israel celebrates God’s covenant relationship with the children of Israel and the fulfillment of His promises to them.
 - a) The arrangement of these gates was reminiscent of the way the twelve tribes camped around the tabernacle.
- 4) There are 12 foundation stones and on each was the name of one of the apostles of Jesus.
- 5) Here, we obviously have an issue to deal with.
 - a) The term "twelve apostles" could refer to the original twelve disciples, (One would assume minus Judas and perhaps including Mathias).
 - b) However, other believers had been called "apostles" (such as Paul and Barnabas).
 - c) There is obviously some debate on this point but, it is more important to understand the symbolism that the church rests on the work of the apostles — the first followers of Jesus than it is to know exactly which of the apostles’ names are being referred to here.
 - d) Paul writes in Eph 2:19-21:

Eph 2:19-21 (NIV)

- 6) Before there was concrete, in a lot of places, buildings were built on huge, quarried stones.
 - a) Another HGTV reference – foundation stone in old 1700’s inn being restored.
 - b) These 12 stones symbolically represent the most solid foundation that one could ever imagine.
 - c) The sheer magnitude of them is beyond anything we have ever seen.
 - d) As we will learn in a moment, each of them would be ~ 350 miles long (1/4 the length of the wall itself).
- 7) Indeed, that does bring us to the size of the city.
 - a) The 12,000 stadia measurement (1,420 miles) is perhaps coincidentally the approximate length of the Roman empire.
 - i) Perhaps for many people at the time, this represented the known world and even the universe to them.
 - b) For us, it represents a square that would fit approximately an area LA to Dallas, Dallas to the Canadian border, back west to the Washington state coast, and then back to LA.
 - i) In land area, basically ½ the size of the US.

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- ii) It is equally high, which literally, this would be a problem if we were still dealing with the old earth.
- c) The thickness of 144 cubits = 216 ft. ((18” x 144)/12)
- d) As measurements go in the universe as we know it today, this is not very large. In fact, it is miniscule!
- e) When we consider it as a cube, its height is also approximately 1420 miles. To help get this number into perspective, here are some distance facts for comparison:
 - i) Space is officially listed as 62 miles from the surface of the earth.
 - ii) The moon is a little over 200,000 miles.
 - iii) Low orbiting satellites are at approximately 1200 miles.
 - iv) The diameter of the earth is ~ 8,000 miles. A little over 5.5 x this 1420 mi distance.
- f) Again, as measurements go in the universe, a cube 1,420 x 1,420 x 1,420 is not very large.
- g) John does comment that these are in human measurements.
- h) *Again, John’s readers would not be able to comprehend lightyears and distances to the moon etc. To them, this was probably representing a size as large as their universe.*
- 8) As I contemplated this size, I wondered if God feels about space and size as scripture indicates He does about time – “day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day.”
- 9) Could He feel the same about space – in other words, he may feel the same about the size of the universe as we knew it as he does about the size of the new Jerusalem?
- 10) As always, our minds are not able to be like God’s mind.

Questions / Comments / Thoughts?

Rev 21:18-21 (NIV)

- 1) The material the walls are made of is jasper. This is the same stone mentioned in verse 11.
- 2) There is also an interesting connection that the LABC makes regarding this.
 - a) Back in chapter 4 vs. 3, John mentions in his description of God,
“And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian.” NIV
 - a) The commentator makes the connection that since the walls are described in this way, it may indicate that everything in the city would radiate the presence of God.
 - b) In light of upcoming comments in John’s continuing vision regarding no requirement for sun or moon for light because God is the light this fits quite well.
- 2) The next comment that John makes is a little confusing:
“and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass”
 - a) The concept of transparent gold is foreign to us.

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- b) We are not able to understand gold that is pure and clear.
 - c) Suffice to say, the idea is that God glory shines thru everything – this is likely the symbolic meaning of this transparentness we read of thru this and other passages.
- 3) The foundation stones were decorated with precious jewels.
- 4) Here we also see debate as to the meanings of the stones.
- a) Some have suggested that this imagery comes from the breastplate of the high priest, which had twelve precious stones on it (Ex 28:17-20),
 - b) Even though the identifications of the stones are different, this is the most likely source of the imagery
 - c) Of course, this is indicating that what had once been the high priest's privilege alone had become part of the very foundation of the city of God, made available to all.
 - d) The high priest would enter the Most Holy Place (again, this is the same shape as the city — a cube) only once each year on the Day of Atonement to make a sacrifice for the sins of the entire nation.
 - e) The Most Holy Place was the place of God's presence.
 - f) In the new Jerusalem, all of God's people will constantly be in his presence.
 - g) Nothing will ever again separate us from him.
- 5) Bottom line is the names of the various stones indicate jewels of various colors — all of them rare and beautiful.
- 6) The picture John gives of this city indicates beauty beyond description.
- 7) Each of the twelve gates was made from a single pearl.
- a) Pearls were very valuable in ancient times so a pearl large enough to make a gate for this great city would be beyond imagining.
- 1) Beginning in the second half of the last verse (21:b), John is transported to within the city walls for a close look at the features of this new home.

Rev 21:b-27 (NIV)

- 2) John begins his description as he says that "the street of the city is pure gold".
- a) In addition, the main street was pure gold, and again, as clear as glass, just like the rest of the city (21:18).
 - b) Again the emphasis is on its purity and transparency in order to radiate the glory of God.
 - c) In ancient times streets were not paved.
 - d) In the wet season streets were mud; in dry times they were dust.
 - e) This is quite a contrast to that is the new Jerusalem, where the redeemed walk on streets of gold!

- 3) Then we have another of these controversial passages. It is controversial because it makes a couple of references to things possibly outside the New Jerusalem which lead to speculations – these references are:
- a) Nations will walk by the light of the city.
 - b) The gates will never close (possible indication that there is traffic in and out of the New Jerusalem).
 - c) Glory and honor of nations will be brought into it.
 - d) Kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it
 - e) Nothing impure, shameful, or deceitful will ever enter it.
 - f) Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.
- 4) If we collect some contextual evidence, I think we can remove some if not all the speculation and clearly see the big picture.
- 5) First, at the beginning of this vision the angel talking to John indicated that ...

"Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God."

- a) The bride of Christ is the church – all of us who are saved go to make up the church and the bride.
 - b) It is inferred here that the Holy City Jerusalem contains the bride – the church – all who are saved.
- 6) Next, we need to address the word used for nations here.
- a) It is ethnos which is defined as - Gentile, pagan; (foreign) nation, a people.
 - b) The passage indicates two things:
 - i) Nations will walk by the light of the city
 - ii) Glory and honor of nations will be brought into it.
 - c) Here I again think MacArthur has the correct perspective

"The idea is not that national identities will be preserved in the eternal state, but rather the opposite. People from every tongue, tribe, and nation — both Jews and Gentiles — will be united as God's people. Every believer will be fully equal in the eternal capital city."

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- 7) Also, considering the kings bringing their splendor into it.
- a) Here, I think the LABC really sums up the intent clearly

All people on earth, even the kings of the earth who experienced power and glory in this world, will simply bring their splendor to God's throne, casting down their

crowns before him. Their splendor will be nothing compared to what they will experience in eternity.

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8) Finally, Jesus himself gives us the true picture of the city and what is outside it in some of his final words to John.

Rev 22:12-14 (NIV)

9) To me, all of this brings only one logical conclusion – the New Jerusalem despite all the description of walls and gates and its size is simply heaven – our final dwelling place.

- a) The walls and gates and guardian angels at the gates should be taken only as symbols of how completely safe and isolated from any and all bad things we are – Not necessarily as literal features of our dwelling place.
- b) We are finally at rest and total peace and security reigns with us for all eternity.