Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

A Walled City in Heaven?
Scripture: Revelation 21
Code: BQ82411

It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (Revelation 21:12–14)

Human language is inadequate to fully describe the unimaginable magnificence of the believers' indescribable eternal home. Unwilling to take the language of Scripture at face value, many seek for 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 do mean? Abandoning the literal meaning of the text leads only to baseless, groundless, futile speculation. The truth about the heavenly city is more than is described, but not less and not different from what is described. It is a material creation, yet so unique as to be unimaginable to us. The words of John provide all the detail we have been given by God to excite our hope.

That the city **had a great and high wall** indicates that it is not an amorphous, nebulous, floating place. It has specific dimensions; it has limits; it can be entered and left through its **twelve gates. At** those **gates twelve angels** were stationed, to attend to God's glory and to serve His people (cf. Heb. 1:14). The **gates** had **names … written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel,** celebrating for all eternity God's covenant relationship with Israel, the people of the promises, the covenants, the Scriptures, and the Messiah. They were arranged symmetrically; **there were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west.** That arrangement is reminiscent of the way the twelve tribes camped around the tabernacle (Num. 2), and of the allotment of the tribal lands around the millennial temple (Ezek. 48).

The massive **wall of the city** was anchored by **twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.** Those **stones** commemorate God's covenant relationship with the church, of which the apostles are the foundation (Eph. 2:20). At the top of each gate was the name of one of the tribes of Israel; at the bottom of each gate was the name of one of the apostles. Thus, the layout of the city's gates pictures God's favor on all His redeemed people, both those under the old covenant, and those under the new covenant.

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