The Capital City of Heaven, Part 1
Revelation 21:9-21
66-83

The description of the capital city of heaven starts in chapter 21 verse 9 and runs all the way to chapter 22 verse 5. And though that is a long portion of Scripture and you might think it would take us a long time to get through it, there's really not much to add. You can almost get the full picture by just reading it. It cannot be embellished. There are few things that can be explained and enriched as we move along. But basically the Scripture itself is so magnificent that in itself it says plenty for us to begin to understand the glories of eternal heaven.

But before we look at the text itself, just some introductory thoughts to get us running. Jesus made a wonderful promise to all of those who believe in Him. He said, "In My Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you and 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."

Now I want to extract out of that section from John 14 just the thought, "In My Father's house are many dwelling places." The Father's house is really the new Jerusalem because that's the abode of God, that's where God will live with His people forever. Back in the first few verses of chapter 21, remember we saw in verse 2 the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. And it says in verse 3, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men." That's the city where we live. That's the city where God dwells. There's no temple in it, as we shall see over in verse 22, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple so that is the house where God dwells, that is His place of abode and that's where we will live with Him.

So here, in fact, is the Father's house being described. What was promised in John 14 is described here in Revelation 21. The place that the Lord has been preparing for His beloved now comes down into the eternal state, descending out of the heaven of heavens into the new heaven and the new earth. And here it is described for us. Remember now, the capital city of heaven is that, it's the capital city of the new heavens and the new earth, the infinite final state. And so, in John 14 Jesus was giving us the promise of heaven. Repeatedly in the New Testament we are told as believers we are citizens of heaven and we are waiting to get to heaven where our Father is, our Savior is, our dwelling is, where our names are written, where our brothers and sisters are, where our affections are, where our hearts are, where our treasure is and where our inheritance dwells.

The country song says, "I want to go home where I belong." And we should experience those kinds of longings for heaven. Heaven is where we will live forever and the Lord knows that we have a desire to know something about it. Like a person traveling to a foreign country wanting to know where they're going to live when they get there, we excite ourselves when we begin to see some of the details about the place we're going to spend eternity. This is a description, again I say, of the Father's house where He is preparing dwellings for us. So God knowing our sense of anticipation,

knowing that we would like to know what it's all about has given us a glimpse of heaven with some very select details. And they're really, frankly, absolutely staggering, mind-boggling and overwhelming.

By the time, just a reminder, we come to chapter 21, the Rapture of the church has passed, the period of the Tribulation and judgment on the earth with all of the death and destruction that went with it is passed. Armageddon, the great battle is passed, it is only a memory. The destruction that comes at the day of the Lord is passed. The thousand-year Millennial Kingdom is over. All rebellion is forever ended and all sinners are in the eternal lake of fire, sent there from the Great White Throne Judgment. Heaven and earth have been uncreated, what is remaining of heaven and earth after the holocausts of judgment. They are reduced to divine energy and God has recreated the new heaven and the new earth which is the eternal state, introduced to us in chapter 21 verse 1. "I saw a new heaven and a new earth." We have seen the vision of the doomed, the damned and the unblessed. We have felt the scorch of eternal hell and the isolation of separation and the relentless pain of everlasting punishment.

But now the vision is of the domain of the blessed. The final eternal home of all the redeemed, the beautiful new heaven and new earth. And in the middle of it this diamond jewel capital city called the new Jerusalem. Time is over and eternity is resumed again.

Now in the first eight verses we already looked at the introduction to the new heavens and the new earth. And in that introduction we were given a glimpse of the capital city, as verse 2 notes, the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And what we said at that time, and I briefly remind you of, is that the present heaven where the saints go who die knowing the Lord, where all of them are, whether they are Old Testament or New Testament, when they've died they go into the current present heaven. That place where God dwells with the holy angels and with the spirits of redeemed men and women, will descend into the new heaven and the new earth, perhaps affixing itself someone on the new earth, settling into that final new heaven and new earth, that marvelous, marvelous new creation as the capital city, the holy city, the place where we dwell, where the Father's house is. We won't be confined to that, as indicated by the gates, we'll move in and out but that will be our dwelling place.

And so, because it is the capital city of eternity, it becomes the focal point of the rest of the description here. The new heavens and the new earth are briefly described and then when you come to verse 9 and you start to look at the holy city, it is described in much more detail because it is the crown jewel, it is the paradise, it is the glittering golden capital of the new heavens and the new earth. It is the place where we will live forever. It is that city referred to a number of times in the book of Hebrews when it says in Hebrews 11:8 that Abraham when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance, he went out not knowing where he was going. But that was only temporary. He wasn't really looking for that place. Verse 10 says he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

He was looking past any earthly city to the heavenly one. In fact, down in verse 16 it talks about Abraham and Sarah and other men and women of faith, it says "Who desire a better country, that is a heavenly one, therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for He has prepared a city for them." And Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 22 we read about the heavenly Jerusalem. And then in chapter 13 of Hebrews and verse 14, "We do not here have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come."

Three times then, in chapter 11, chapter 12, chapter 13, there is a Jerusalem to come. There is a city whose builder and maker is God, a city with foundations, a lasting city. And what was seen by the faith of Abraham and Sarah and many others, what was anticipated by the writer of Hebrews and those who have been a part of the redeemed throughout history is now given to us by way of description.

Now let's look then at verse 9. First of all we will see the general appearance...the general appearance. Verse 9, "And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, came and spoke with me, saying `Come here, I shall show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.'"

Now the last mention of an angel was in chapter 20 and verse 1, a thousand years earlier, before the Millennial Kingdom. Here we again meet an angel, of course angels have been a very significant part of the book of Revelation, they're scattered all throughout this book. This is an angel that we already know. This is one of the judgment angels. He is described to us in verse 9 as one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues.

Now you remember that there were during the time of the Tribulation unfolding judgments. First there are seven seal judgments, seven trumpet judgments follow and seven bowl judgments follow those. They stretch over the seven-year period. The seal judgments stretch over the whole period. The seven trumpets are contained within the seventh seal and occur toward the end. The seven bowl judgments are all contained within the seventh trumpet, like a telescope, and they are rapid fire in the last final few days of the Tribulation period.

In chapter 15, and we won't go back into the detail of it, but in chapter 15 those final rapid-fire judgments are introduced. It says, "Seven angels who had seven plagues which are the last...which are the last." Seven angels appear, they have seven plagues which are the last. Down in verse 7 of chapter 15 it says, "Those seven angels had seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever." They were flat bowls that would be dumped, almost like a saucer. And the judgment would come inundating the world.

And then when you come to chapter 16, "And a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, `God and pour out the seven bowls of wrath of God into the earth,'" and then the first angel, the second, and so forth all the way through the chapter as the final judgments are poured out in the world. Each of those seven angels had a bowl of wrath, a bowl of judgment which is described there in chapter 16 at the very end of the Tribulation. They were very special judgment angels.

Here we meet one of them, back to verse 9, one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues. One, by the way, also one of those angels introduced the harlot Babylon back in chapter 17 verse 1, so these angels are fulfilling several functions. So one of those angels appears to John, it says, "Came and spoke with me saying," and evidently those angels were recognizable. John remembered that this is one of the angels that he had seen in his vision of the seven last plagues. And the angel says, "Come here, I shall show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

Here is a formerly used angel, used in judgment to be used in showing John eternal blessing. And

the angel describes the city, interestingly, as the bride, the wife of the Lamb. That seems like a strange way to describe a city. Well go back to verse 2, "I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God made ready as a bride adorned for her husband."

Why is it called a city that is a bride? Because it draws its character from its occupants. And its occupants are the eternal bride of Christ, now enlarged beyond the church to encompass all the redeemed of all the ages. When you go back in to chapter 19 verses 7 to 9 and you talk about the bride there and the marriage supper of the Lamb, of course the bride is the church. We find that very clearly in Ephesians chapter 5. But as you move along in the unfolding of the eschatological plan, the bride enlarges to encompass all the redeemed.

Ultimately the bride that was defined as the church widens, even at the time of the marriage supper, Old Testament saints are invited as guests. And then when the final great feast celebration occurs which we could make equal to the Millennial Kingdom, the Old Testament saints are mingled there as well with the New. And then when the marriage is consummated in eternity, all the saints make up the bride and the bride then characterizes this city because its occupants are the redeemed, joined together in the new Jerusalem, all living in the Father's house as the bride of God, if you will, all included in the consummation of God's saving purpose. The city is like a bride because the people are forever united to God and to the Lamb. It takes on the character of its inhabitants. It is a city with virgin beauty, virgin virtue and intimate relationship to the living God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the angel says to John, "Come here and I'll show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." He's going to get a personal tour of the capital city of eternity. And verse 10 says, "And he carried me away in the Spirit." What a rich thought that is.

What does that mean? Well it means he went on a spiritual journey. Remember, John was on the island of Patmos at the time he received all of this. He was sitting there as a prisoner on that rock, and indeed it is a rock in the middle of the Mediterranean. But he was transported spiritually by means of vision to see things and behold things that were not just dreams but spiritual realities, perhaps very much like the Apostle Paul being caught up into the third heaven. And the angel carried me away in the Spirit, a true spiritual journey to see what human eyes could never see, and if they did they could never tell.

And he took him, it says, to a high, a great and high mountain. I guess the idea there is that the angel to him to as high a point as he could possibly take him so he could get as close to this glorious celestial city suspended in the new heavens and the new earth as possible. And when he got him in this vision way up on a great and high mountain, it says he showed me the holy city Jerusalem, the city with foundations, the city that lasts, the city whose builder and maker was God.

And he says again, "It was coming down out of heaven from God." That is repeated again from verse 2 and it is to remind you that it is not the creation of heaven here, it is simply the descent of what already existed from eternity past. God creates a new heaven and a new earth in the sense of a created universe. But descending into that created universe is an already eternally existing dwelling place that has always been the abode of God and the abode of the redeemed and the holy angels. And even once was the abode of Satan and demons who fell and were cast out.

John then notices again that it is coming down from God out of heaven. It is of divine origin, built by

God from all eternity and prepared to descend into the new heaven and the new earth. And as I said, perhaps it lands somewhere on the new earth and rests in that very place. It has been existence forever as God's home, as God's temple, as God's throne and now it descends into its appropriate place.

And then verse 11, again we're just looking at the general appearance, "Having the glory of God." Now there is the most distinguishing characteristic of the capital city of eternity. It has the glory of God in it. That is heaven where the full expression of the glory of God is manifest unlimited and unconfined, where the glory of God is flashing from that city throughout all eternity.

God's glory, remember now, is who He is. His glory is simply His attributes. But when God manifests His invisible spiritual attributes, He manifests them as...what?...as light. And we see that throughout the Scripture. God has revealed His glory in light. He revealed His glory to Adam and Eve in the Garden, no doubt in the Shekinah light of His presence. He revealed His glory to Moses and to the people of Israel in the sky and on the face of Moses. He revealed His glory in the tabernacle when a cloud of light came down into the tabernacle so the priests couldn't even minister. He revealed His glory in the temple when the temple was built in the holy land it was filled with the glory of God, blazing light came down. And the sad fact is that in each case where God revealed His glory, He was rejected through disobedience, pride and rebellion.

But He continually brought His glory back. His glory returned to an apostate Israel in human form in our Lord Jesus Christ, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of God, John 1:14. And the world hated Him and rejected the glory again. They rejected it every time it came, they rejected it again in Christ. Some day Jesus will return, Matthew 24, Matthew 25 says He'll return in glory, blazing, blinding glory. And at His return, of course, men will curse Him and be destroyed. When the glory comes, according to Revelation 6 it says they will cry for the mountains and the rocks to fall on them to hide them from the presence of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

God has displayed His glory as light numerous times. The transfiguration of Jesus was the revealing of the essence of His nature in light. But finally, in the new heaven and the new earth, in the capital city which is the new Jerusalem, the holy city, His glory revealed as light will be full and limitless and unconfined. You remember back in the Old Testament in Exodus chapter 33 God said, "No man can see My face and live." And Moses said, "I want to see You." So God said to him, "You have to put a veil over your face, I'll let a little of My afterglow shine on you because you could never see the full glory."

Well now in this new heaven and new earth, radiating from the center of this jewel called the new Jerusalem is the blazing full glory of God. In fact, it is so great, look at verse 23, "That the city has no need of the sun or the moon to shine on it for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb." Both God the Father and the Lamb are the light of it. And it is a blazing light. And that's why there's no need for sun or moon or any other kind of illumination because the glory of God is so comprehensibly and fully revealed.

Isaiah saw this in Isaiah 60 and verse 19. "No longer will you have the sun for light by day, nor for brightness will the moon give you light, but you will have the Lord for an everlasting light and your God for your glory," Isaiah 60 and verse 19. What a great statement. You will have the Lord for an everlasting light and your God for your glory.

So the first thing that strikes John as he is taken to this high mountain and he looks up and sees the holy city, the new Jerusalem, is that it has the glory of God. The blazing out of the middle is this light. He is the light of heaven, He is the light of the city. And it comes out of that city and I believe it will fill all of the new heavens and the new earth. And it calls attention to His majesty and His wonder and His character.

Now John wants to kind of describe this light for us. He makes this effort to do it, verse 11. "Her brilliance," ...her referring back to the city where the glory dwells..."Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal- clear jasper." Her brilliance refers back to the light of God's glory. The word is phoster, it means something in which light is concentrated and from which light radiates. It would be like a light bulb, something in which light exists is concentrated and from which it radiates.

So John sees this city like a light bulb where light is just pouring out of it. Only it comes not through some thin film of plain glass, such as light bulbs that we know, but it comes through what appears to him like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. That is to say that the whole city looks like one big stone.

Now when you think about jasper you've got to...you've got to think in terms of ancient understanding because our modern jasper is opaque, but this one is not. Iaspisis the Greek word and the Hebrew word is almost identical, yashepheh. And what you have here is not a translation but a transliteration. The best understanding of that term is that it's a diamond, crystal clear, it is a diamond.

Now I don't know a lot about diamonds but I have shopped for one many years ago and another more recently to celebrate an anniversary. And, in fact, when I was in South Africa I went to a diamond cutter place because that's a major industry there and learned some things and we all who have shopped for diamonds understand that as the thing becomes more and more clear it becomes more and more expensive. And when it is perfectly clear, it is perfectly ridiculous. When it reaches the point where it has no blemish and no spot and there's nothing in it except flawless, perfect, crystal-clear refracted light, you have what is called a perfect gem. That is precisely what is intended by this little phrase "crystal-clear jasper." It is a gem, it is flawless. It is like a diamond not with light shining on it but with light shining from it, coming from the inside and refracting its rainbow colors all over the new heavens and the new earth.

So the city is like one massive perfect diamond gem, flashing the reflection of God's glory in infinite light--the ultimate light show, believe me. All of eternity then becomes bathed in the radiating splendor of God. And that is the remarkable general appearance. It is like a massive, and when I say massive, I mean massive because it is 1500 miles squared, or cubed, really...1500 miles cubed, one massive crystal-clear diamond gem with the glory of God shining out from the center of it and splattering its rainbow colors all over the new heavens and the new earth.

Now I know God loves beauty, don't you? I know that because I can see flashes of that brilliance in the gems that I can see and flashes of His love for color in a rainbow and in the myriad colors that ring the world and the beauty of flowers and all the rest. And when God is really turned loose, beauty is going to emanate everywhere, blazing unbelievable incomparable beauty.

Now that's the general appearance. Now the angel is very good to John and to us because he doesn't just stop with the general appearance. He lingers long enough for John to get a closer look at this blazing diamond. And we move from the general appearance to a second category here, the exterior design...the exterior design. And this is...this is astonishing stuff. And here, folks, we have to acknowledge that human words and human features really fall short. We...our minds are going to have a hard time grasping this but I think you're going to understand at least enough to excite your heart.

And let me tell you something else. You can't mess with this. I tell you, I've read maybe 30/40 commentaries on the book of Revelation. I have read a myriad of prophetic books and various insights into the theme of heaven and the subject of the new heaven and the new earth. And what bothers me most is when people start to say, "Well what it really means is this..." And immediately I respond by saying, "Who told you that? If it doesn't mean what it says, then what does it mean? It means what you say it means? Well where did you get that information?"

There is no way to say anymore than what this says. And if it means something other than what it says, then that's going to be...that's going to have to be left to the time in the future when we experience it for us to understand it. But I would venture to say God got us as close to understanding the reality of it as our minds could comprehend. And He didn't try to write a riddle here, and He didn't try to write some kind of mystical stuff that we would have to fuss to try to interpret in our own feeble brains, He simply told us this is how it is. And yet it is absolutely appalling to me that some guy will say, "Well it says this but what it really means..." and then he'll give some exotic personal viewpoint. And I'm going to beg off on that and simply say all I know is what the Bible says and that's all I can tell you.

And verse 12 says, "It had a great and high wall." So what does that mean? It had a great and high wall. That's what it means and if it means anything else, then I don't know what it means. "And it had twelve gates and at the gates twelve angels and names were written on them which are those of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel." Now is that too hard to understand? No. By the way, everything has perfect symmetry. Everything has perfect balance. Everything is in perfect order. That reflects a God who demands symmetry, balance and order. That's the way the mind of God operates. The mind of God is incredibly balanced and ordered...very different than the chaotic kind of art and music that's characteristic of our culture.

The scene is overwhelmingly impressive. And we take it at face value. It had a great and high wall. That is to say it is not amorphous, nebulous, floating place, it is a place with dimensions. It has an outer wall. It has limits. You can go in it and you can come out of it because it has gates.

You say, "Well, if it has a wall, how high is the wall?" How high is high? Well, fortunately it tells you in verse 17 something about the wall. "He measured its wall seventy-two yards," that's 144 cubits, a cubit is from the elbow to the tip of your middle finger, basically about 18 inches. Well it's about 72 yards, about 216 feet. "He measured the wall seventy-two yards according to human measurements."

You say, "Is that the height of it?" It doesn't say that, does it? It doesn't say that's the height of it. Well come back to that in a minute. But it does have a great and high wall. It has twelve gates, and that's so we can go in and out like any city. And at the gates there are twelve angels. And I think they're there to welcome us, to say, "Welcome home." Or when we leave to say, "Have a nice trip. By the

way, where are you going?"

"Oh I don't know, I'm just out for the day."

I think they're there to welcome us in and to welcome us out. They're there to symbolize holiness and to fulfill their duty of attending to the glory of God and serving the glorified saints. After all, angels are the servants of the saints, aren't they? Hebrews 1:14.

In addition to that, verse 12 says, "And names were written on them." Each gate had a name written on it and each of those names was taken from one of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. That's pretty simple, isn't it? You've got a great and high wall, it's got twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels. And each of those gates has the name of one of the tribes of Israel on it.

Verse 13 tells you the symmetry. "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." It reminds me, doesn't it, remind you of the way God organized the tribes around the tabernacle? Put the tabernacle in the middle and had three tribes at each side. And by the way, that is also the way God will organize His people around the Millennial temple, the temple that will be built in the Millennial Kingdom that is described in Ezekiel 48. So here you see the same thing. Each of the gates has the name of the tribe, three on each side. And, of course, that celebrates, doesn't it, for all eternity God's unique covenant relationship with Israel.

And then verse 14, it says, "And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones and on them were the twelve names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb." So now you get down to the foundation stones. There are twelve of those so we can assume there are three of those probably under those three gates on each of the sides. And at the top of the gate you have the tribe of Israel. At the bottom of the gate on the foundation stone you have the name of one of the twelve Apostles. Again, celebrating God's wonderful covenant relationship with His church. The Apostles of the church being the foundation of the church, according to Ephesians 2:20. So it shows God's favor on those under the old covenant. God's favor on those under the new covenant. And we learn something else about the city, it had to be square, right? Three...three...three...three, and we see the symmetry of it again.

So we see the exterior design then. That the three gates on each side have names above and names below, tribes of Israel and names of Apostles. And then a curious thing happens in verse 15. "And the one who spoke with me, who was one of the seven angels who had the seven plagues, had a gold measuring rod to measure the city and its gates and its wall."

Now the one who spoke to me again is that angel and he had this measuring rod. Now this is an interesting thing because we've seen this before. If we were to go back, and we won't take the time, to Ezekiel chapter 40, from Ezekiel 40 to 48 you have a description of the millennial temple, that is the temple that exists in the Millennial Kingdom, the thousand-year reign of Christ. When you go back to chapter 40 and verse 3 you see God there and God is measuring the millennial temple. He's got what is really in that context a nine-foot reed and He uses that nine-foot reed to measure that millennial temple.

When you go back to Revelation 11 and you might look at that just briefly, go back to Revelation chapter 11. John says, "There was given me a measuring rod, like a staff, and someone said, `Rise

and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship in it.'" Now this would be the Tribulation temple, the temple that exists during the time of the Tribulation. John sees that in His vision. He's told to get up and measure it.

So, the Tribulation temple was measured. The Millennial temple was measured. What's the significance of that? The significance of it is that it belonged to God. In other words, God is measuring out what was His. He measures out His millennial city. He measures out His temple in the time of the Tribulation. And here God is measuring out the capital city of heaven, again an indication that it belongs to Him.

Now when it says "a gold measuring rod," it's referring to a reed which was the standard for measure, about ten-feet long. Only this wasn't a reed, it was gold. And this angel has a gold rod with which he measures the city to indicate, of course, it belongs to God. As you might plot out the lines on your own property, this angel is measuring off, of course, the city which is the possession of God.

Now let's see what he finds out. He's going to measure the city and then he's going to measure the gates and he's going to measure the wall. Verse 16, "And the city is laid out as a square," tetragonos, foursquare, all sides and all angels are equal. The city is laid out as a square. "Its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal."

It is 1500 miles measured in those directions. Now some have suggested because it says length and width and height it could be a pyramid. And it is conceivable that that is possible. But it is best seen as a cube, a perfect cube and I'll tell you why. Because the closest earthly counterpart we have to this was when God gave orders for the building of the holy place in the tabernacle and the temple which was a cube.

Henry Morris writes some interesting things about this. "The pyramid whether in Egypt, Mexico or the stepped towers of practically all ancient nations, seems always to have been associated with paganism with the pyramid's apex being dedicated to the worship of the sun. The first such structure was the Tower of Babel and the Bible always later condemns worship carried out in high places...whether these were simply natural high hills or artificially constructed hills in the form of a pyramid or ziggurat. The cube, on the other hand, was the shape specified by God for the holy place, such as in Solomon's temple, 1 Kings 6:20."

And I think that there's another reason for this that has to be a cube and that is because the walls have to be at least as high as the city. And what would be the point of having three gates on each side if it was a pyramid. And I'll show you why I say that. Because if it is a cube you have to get access to all the layers, so the gate has to run from the bottom to...what?...to the top. And if it's a cube then it's sort of pointless, no it's not pointless, but it's pointless, you understand.

It also needs to be remembered that we will in that city apparently travel vertically as well as horizontally and so streets will not just be going this way, they'll be going up and down as well. They will not only be going horizontal, they will be going vertical. The blocks will be cubical blocks instead of square areas like they are in our present life. And that makes it understandable that we could all live there.

You say, "It's only 1500 miles cubed? Is that enough to get us all in?" Listen to what Henry Morris says, "This kind of geometry makes it easier to understand how all the redeemed of all the ages could be living in a single city. Although there's no way to know precisely how many people will be there, one can make at least somewhat accurate guess. It can be calculated," he says, "of the total number of people who have lived between Adam's time and our time is about 40 billion. Then assuming that a similar number will be born during the Millennium, because of the conditions, and allowing another 20 billion who died before or soon after death and never really populated the earth, it is reasonable that about 100 billion men, women and children could have been members of the human race, past, present and future.

"Assume for the sake of argument that 20 percent of these will be saved, including all of those who die in infancy. It's obviously only a guess but the Lord Jesus did make it plain that the large majority will never be saved, right? If this figure is used then the new Jerusalem would have to accommodate 20 billion residents. Also assume that 25 percent of the city is used for the dwelling places of the inhabitants with the rest allocated to streets, parks, public buildings, etc."

Then he figures out in some exotic calculation, and he's a scientist, that the average space assigned to each person would be one over thirty cubic miles. This would correspond to a cubicle block with about 75 acres on each face. Obviously there's adequate room in the holy city for all who will be there.

Another way to calculate this immense city is shared by an F. W. Borrem(?) and he shares this quite interesting...in quite interesting terms. He says, "Now if you work it out, 1500 cubed, you have an area of two million, two hundred and fifty thousand square miles. The only city foursquare," he says, "that I ever saw is Adelaide in South Australia. The ship that brought me out from the old country called in there for a couple of days and I thought it was a fine city. But as you know very well, the city of Adelaide covers only one-square mile. Each of the four sides is a mile long. London covers an area of 140 square miles. But this city, the city foursquare, it is two million, two hundred and fifty thousand times as big as Adelaide, fifteen thousand times as big as London," and he goes on to make some other comparatives.

Well, you get the picture. It's big enough. Plus we're not all going to be there at the same time, I guess you could say, since we're moving through the universe. All of that is kind of silly, but it does give you some perspective so that you don't come up and ask me a question I can't answer anyway. What a place, rising vertically, streets upon streets upon streets upon streets, people going this way, going that way. The distance would be from the tip of Florida to the tip of Maine, which is about 1500 miles. Every street...every street, the length of every street would be one-fifth the diameter of the earth. So you would have millions of golden miles going in every direction.

And then in verse 17 it says, "He measured the wall and it was 72 yards." And my first reaction to that is that's a very short wall, 21 feet high, what good is that going to do when you've got a 1500 mile-high city. But then I noticed that it doesn't say that's the height. And I decided that it must be the width. It's better to see it as the thickness. It is 72 yards, I love this, 216 feet thick, isn't that precise? And I know somebody is going to come along and say, "Well it really doesn't mean that." I can just tell you that's what it says. And to the person who says that he has an answer. "It is 72 yards according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements." So don't go saying..."Well, of course, that doesn't count with the angels." It's the same.

Do you realize that an inch is an inch whether you're a human or an angel? A foot is a foot whether you're a man or an angel? I love that, that's put there for the spiritualizers who are going to say, "Well, of course, angelic measurements would be different than human measurements." No they're not. And if it's that exact, folks, if it's exactly 144 cubits or 72 yards or 216 feet, that's precise enough to let me know God wanted to say that. Don't ask me what the mystical meaning of 216 is, there isn't any. Don't fool with the literal. It's the same for the angels as it is for you guys down there. Staggering, 216 feet thick and it rises 1500 miles. And so the gate runs from the bottom to the top so you can access anywhere you want to go.

What was the wall made out of? Verse 18, "Now the material of the wall was jasper," where did we see that? Back in verse 9. What's that? They were diamond walls. It was a diamond wall. No wonder when he saw it he thought he was seeing a diamond, right? Because you've got 1500 miles walled on all sides with diamond, and that's just one massive cube diamond. Now normally a cube wouldn't necessarily, just a simple cube wouldn't refract enough light, you need more cuts than that. Well there are plenty of other things that are going to contribute to that. The material of the wall was jasper, and then look at this, "And the city," the rest of what was in it, "was pure gold like clear glass."

Now have you ever seen pure gold like clear glass? I haven't. Gold is opaque, it's extremely opaque. It's not clear and it's not like glass. You say, "Well what is this?" This is some different kind. This is translucent gold. You haven't seen it but you're going to live in it.

You say, "Well, why does it have to be clear?" You tell me why? Because that city has one great purpose in the new heaven and the new earth and that is to do...what?...to radiate the glory of God and you can't have anything blocking it. So the brilliant flashing color of gold but transparent lends to the firing of that glory of God through every...every component. Nothing can stop or block the radiance of God, it shines out through everything.

You say, "Well one thing strikes me immediately. There won't be any privacy in that city." That's fine. You won't need any...you won't need any. There will be nothing that calls for privacy.

Then John takes us to the foundation in verse 19. "The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone." Now he's down to the foundations, the bottom. And this is amazing detail, I mean, it's absolutely amazing detail. These stones here, and I'll try to explain what they refer to because some of them are...their names have changed through the centuries and... Eight of these twelve stones are found in the breastplate of the high priest. Go back to Exodus 28, Exodus 39. Eight of these are found in the breastplate of the high priest. The four others are not even included in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, so they could still also be connected with the high priest's breastplate, we don't know. But there might well be a connection between the glory that was displayed and the breastplate of the high priest representing the glory of God and what we see here.

First of all, again the first foundation stone was jasper, yashepheh, iaspis, radiant, white, crystal-clear diamond with its flashing colors. And then the second was sapphire, a brilliant blue. The third was chalcedony...Chalcedon is an old name for Turkey and this was some kind of an agate stone, the best we can tell, sky blue with...with translucent stripes of color. And then the fourth was emerald which is, of course, a blazing bright green. The fifth was sardonyx which is a red and white stone. The sixth was sardius, a rather common red stone that was from the quartz family. The seventh was chrysolite, that's a...Pliny calls that a transparent sort of lucid gold tone, or yellow tone stone. And

then it says the eighth, beryl, that's a sea green. The ninth, topaz, transparent yellow green. The tenth, chrysoprase, that's another shade of green. The eleventh, jacinth which was a brilliant shining violet color. And the twelfth, amethyst, which is purple.

Now what you have, of course, is just a blazing, blazing panoply of these brilliant colors that the light of God's glory is shining through as they make up the foundation of the heavenly city. The general picture then is one of just unbelievable beauty, indescribable beauty, a spectrum of color blazing everywhere. The light of the gold, the diamond transparent city shining through the diamond walls, pushing its light through all of these colored jewels forms a scene of dazzling wondrous incredible beauty.

And then, we'll close with this tonight, John describes the gates. And this is mind boggling. Now remember, these gates could well run the full height of the city. Verse 21, "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls." That is some oyster. No, these have to be pearls of God's own making. These pearls are like nothing ever produced by an oyster. Each one of the gates was a single pearl, a 15-mile-high pearl...1500-mile-high pearl. Why? Well maybe there's some marvelous spiritual symbolism there. John Phillips writes this, "How appropriate. All other precious gems are metals or stones, but a pearl is a gem formed within the oyster. It is the only one formed by living flesh. The humble oyster receives an irritation or a wound and around the offending article that has penetrated and hurt it, the oyster builds a pearl. The pearl, we might say, is the answer of the oyster to that which injured it. And the glory land is God's answer in Christ to the wicked men who crucified heaven's beloved and put Him to open shame. How like God it is to make the gates of the new Jerusalem pearls. The saints as they come and go will be forever reminded as they pass the gates of glory that access to God's home is only because of Calvary.

"Think of the size of those gates. Think of the supernatural pearls from which they are made. What gigantic suffering is symbolized by those gates of pearl? Throughout the endless ages we shall be reminded by those pearly gates of the immensity of the sufferings of Christ Those pearls hung eternally, as it were, at the access routes to glory will remind us forever of One who hung upon a tree and whose answer to those who injured Him was to invite them to forever share His home," end quote.

Beautifully said, isn't it? Heaven is entered through suffering by a wounded Redeemer. And we'll always be reminded of it as we pass the pearls.

Well, so much for general appearance and exterior design. Are you ready to go inside? Come back next week and we'll do just that.

Father, thank You for this wonderful, wonderful thrilling glimpse of our heavenly home. Oh how we rejoice in the prospects that await us when we come to be with You forever. And, Lord, we know that right now You're preparing that place for us and some day You'll come and take us to it. And we'll be in that wonderful place, living with You when we leave this world. We'll be there even before it descends into the new heaven and the new earth because it's where You live now with the spirits of just men, righteous men and women made perfect. Oh how we long for the city of God, the diamond city, the gates of pearl, the bejeweled city. But most of all, how we long to be engulfed in Your blazing glory, how privileged we are to have such a hope. And we praise and thank You for it, in the Savior's name. Amen.

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