

LESSON 6

The Incredible Size and Structure of the Heavenly City

Revelation 21:15-21

The one who spoke with me had a golden measuring rod to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out in a square; its length and width are the same. He measured the city with the rod at 12,000 stadia. Its length, width, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall, 144 cubits according to human measurement, which the angel used, Revelation 21:15-17.

Class Overview: In Revelation 21, John describes the heavenly city with overwhelming detail: its massive measurements, perfect symmetry, dazzling gates, strong foundations, and streets of pure gold. These features are not meant to give us a blueprint but to remind us of heaven's sufficiency, security, and glory. The city is vast enough for all of God's people, strong enough to keep them safe forever, and beautiful enough to reflect His majesty. The design shows that the whole city is the dwelling place of God, where His people will live in His presence for eternity.

Class Objectives:

By the end of this class, you should be able to:

1. To understand the meaning behind the city's immense size and perfect symmetry.
 2. To see how the gates and foundations symbolize unity between God's people of all ages.
 3. To appreciate the materials of the city as symbols of purity, holiness, and eternal value.
 4. To recognize that heaven's structure points to God's presence and eternal security.
 5. To deepen our hope and longing for heaven by reflecting on the glory of God displayed in His eternal city.
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Introduction:

When John is carried away in the Spirit to see the holy city, he witnesses something beyond imagination. Revelation 21 tells us the angel used a gold measuring rod to measure the city, its wall, and its gates. What he recorded exceeds human scale. The city is arranged as a perfect square: its length, width, and height are all equal. Each side measures 12,000 stadia, approximately 1,400 miles. The wall itself is 144 cubits thick. Even the gates and foundations are described in detail, crafted with precious stones and metals of incredible beauty.

Why would God give such specific measurements? It's not just to impress us with the size. The picture is meant to tell us something about the perfection, security, and glory of our eternal home. The city isn't cramped or limited. It's vast, capable of holding the redeemed from all ages. Its perfect symmetry shows

the harmony and order of God's eternal plan. And its walls, foundations, and gates demonstrate that nothing sinful will ever enter there.

As we examine the size and structure of the heavenly city, we must remember this: the details are not provided to satisfy our curiosity but to strengthen our faith and deepen our longing. Heaven is a place prepared by God. It is large enough, strong enough, and glorious enough for every soul who belongs to Him.

The Vast Measurements of the City (21:15-17)

The one who spoke with me had a golden measuring rod to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out in a square; its length and width are the same. He measured the city with the rod at 12,000 stadia. Its length, width, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall, 144 cubits according to human measurement, which the angel used, Revelation 21:15-17.

From the Text

A. A City Beyond Comprehension

- The angel's golden rod shows the importance of precision—this city is not imagined but carefully measured by God Himself.
- 12,000 stadia equals about 1,400 miles. That means the city would stretch farther than New York to Dallas or Miami to Denver. And it is just as high as it is wide.
- If mapped over the United States, the city would cover nearly half the country.
- The picture is meant to overwhelm us. John is giving us a sense of size that words can hardly contain.

B. A City of Perfection

- The city is a perfect cube. In Scripture, the only other cube was the **Most Holy Place** in the tabernacle and temple (1 Kings 6:20).
- The Most Holy Place was where God's presence dwelled and where only the high priest could enter once a year. Now, the whole city is the Holy of Holies. God's presence fills it completely, and His people live in that presence forever.
- The symmetry of the measurements speaks to God's perfect design. Nothing is crooked, out of balance, or incomplete.

C. A City of Security

- The wall measures 144 cubits thick (about 200 feet). That's thicker than the widest castle walls built in human history.
- The number "144" (12 x 12) points again to God's people. The wall exists for them, ensuring that what belongs to God will never be threatened again.

- Evil and sin, which plagued the old world, will never breach these walls. The redeemed will dwell in perfect safety.

Application

- The size of the city reminds us that heaven is not small or exclusive. It has been prepared for *all* who obey the gospel. There is room for Abraham, Moses, David, Paul, and you.
- The perfection of the city tells us heaven will not disappoint. Every detail of God's plan is flawless.
- The security of the city assures us of eternal rest. Once we enter, nothing can drive us out.

The Gates and Foundations of the City (21:12-14; 18-21)

It had a massive high wall with twelve gates; twelve angels were at the gates. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel were inscribed on the gates... The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb were on the foundations, Revelation 21:12-14.

From the Text

A. The Twelve Gates

- The city has **twelve gates**, with **twelve angels** at the gates.
- The names of the **twelve tribes of Israel** are written on them (v. 12).
- Gates are arranged, three on each side, signifying full access from every direction of the earth.
- Each gate is made from a **single pearl** (v. 21), symbolizing both purity and great cost. Pearls in Scripture often picture something precious and treasured (cf. Matthew 13:45-46).
- The gates remind us that heaven is entered only through the Lamb—no other way in (John 10:9).

B. The Twelve Foundations

- The city wall rests on **twelve foundations** (v. 14).
- Each foundation is inscribed with the names of the **twelve apostles of the Lamb**.
- The foundations are decorated with every kind of precious stone (vv. 19-20)—jasper, sapphire, emerald, amethyst, and others—showing dazzling variety and beauty.
- This imagery ties the New Testament apostles with the Old Testament tribes. Together, they show the unity of God's people across all time.

C. The Significance

- The gates and foundations symbolize **continuity and completeness**, the redeemed are one people, built on the testimony of Israel and the teaching of the apostles.
- Gates show **welcome and access**; foundations show **strength and stability**.

- The building materials remind us of the surpassing worth of the church and the cost of our salvation.

Application

- The way into heaven is open, but only through Christ.
- God's people are not divided; Old Covenant and New Covenant believers are united in Him.
- Heaven's structure testifies that our faith is not fragile; it rests on an unshakable foundation.

The Materials and Streets of the City (21:18, 21)

The building material of its wall was jasper, and the city was pure gold clear as glass. The twelve gates are twelve pearls; each individual gate was made of a single pearl. The main street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass, Revelation 21:18, 21.

From the Text

A. Walls and City of Pure Materials

- The walls are built of **jasper** (v. 18), a stone that shines with clear brilliance. It symbolizes purity and God's glory.
- The entire city is of **pure gold, clear as glass** (v. 18). This is not ordinary gold, it is transparent, surpassing anything known on earth. It represents holiness and perfection.

B. The Gates of Pearl

- Each gate is a **single pearl** (v. 21). Imagine the size of such pearls—far beyond anything earthly.
- Pearls are formed through suffering—an oyster produces a pearl when wounded. Many see this as a reminder that our entrance into heaven came through the suffering of Christ.
- The gates show that the way into the city was costly, yet beautiful.

C. The Street of Gold

- The city has a **main street of pure gold, transparent as glass** (v. 21).
- Streets in earthly cities show where people walk and live. In heaven, even the streets shine with holiness. Nothing common or corrupt is found there.
- The beauty is not just for display—it reflects the glory of God and the purity of life within the city.

Application

- The heavenly city is not built with ordinary materials. Its glory is beyond comparison, showing us that heaven is not like this world.
- What men value most (gold, pearls, jewels) is common building material in heaven. Earth's treasures are nothing compared to the riches of God's eternal dwelling.

- The purity and brilliance of these materials remind us that heaven is a place of holiness, where nothing impure can ever enter.

The Perfect Symmetry and Order of the City (21:16)

The city is laid out in a square; its length and width are the same. He measured the city with the rod at 12,000 stadia. Its length, width, and height are equal, Revelation 21:16.

From the Text

A. The City as a Perfect Cube

- John says, “*Its length, width, and height are equal.*”
- This is not random. In Scripture, only one other structure had this shape: the **Most Holy Place** (1 Kings 6:20).
- The cube design signals **perfection, holiness, and God’s presence filling all**. The entire city is God’s dwelling place.

B. A Symbol of Completeness

- The cube is balanced on all sides—no part lacking, no imperfection.
- This reflects God’s eternal order. In heaven, there is no chaos, disorder, or imbalance. Everything is whole and complete.
- Unlike earthly cities, which are filled with brokenness, heaven is flawless in every way.

C. A Dwelling Place for God’s People

- In the Old Testament, only the high priest entered the Holy of Holies—and only once a year.
- In the heavenly city, *all God’s people* will dwell in His presence forever. There are no limits, no restrictions, no veil.
- The design shows the fulfillment of God’s promise: “*Look, God’s dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them*” (Revelation 21:3).

Application

- The structure of the city assures us that heaven is a place of perfect balance and harmony. Nothing will ever be out of place.
- The cube design reminds us that our relationship with God will be complete. We will see Him face to face.
- The order of the city shows us the difference between this world of disorder and the eternal home where all is right.

The Glory Reflected in the City’s Structure (21:11, 22-23)

arrayed with God's glory. Her radiance was like a precious jewel, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. I did not see a temple in it, because the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, because the glory of God illuminates it, and its lamp is the Lamb, Revelation 22:11, 22-23.

From the Text

A. The Radiance of God's Glory

- John says the city “shone with the glory of God, like a precious jewel, clear as crystal” (v. 11).
- The design, materials, and measurements are not just about size—they are about **reflecting God's presence**.
- The city itself becomes a mirror of His majesty.

B. No Temple, No Sun, No Moon

- The city has **no temple**, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (v. 22).
- It does not need the sun or the moon. The **glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp** (v. 23).
- Everything in the city draws attention to God and His Son.

C. Structure with a Purpose

- The walls, gates, foundations, and streets are not random details. They form a city that exists for one reason: to display God's glory and provide a dwelling place for His people.
- The very design tells us heaven is not about us—it is about Him.

Application

- The glory of heaven is not measured in size, walls, or gold—but in the **presence of God Himself**.
- The structure reminds us that worship will be our joy and focus for eternity.
- If God is not your glory here, you will not enjoy the glory of His presence there.

Conclusion

When John saw the holy city, its size and structure overwhelmed him. The vast measurements showed that this was a place with room for all God's people. The gates and foundations signified access and stability, built on the testimony of Israel and the apostles. The materials—gold, pearls, precious stones—reminded him that heaven is far wealthier than anything on earth. Its perfect symmetry indicated that this is no ordinary city but the dwelling place of God Himself. And its brilliance revealed that the city is all about His glory.

These descriptions aren't meant to satisfy curiosity or serve as a blueprint. They aim to inspire hope, strengthen faith, and deepen longing. Heaven is real. Heaven is prepared. And heaven is enough. Its size

demonstrates its sufficiency. The walls show its safety. Its beauty reveals its perfection. And its glory highlights its purpose—to live forever in God's presence and with the Lamb.

The question we face is straightforward: are we preparing to live there? The gates are open, but only for those who belong to Christ. If this is the city we desire, then let us live now as citizens of heaven, ready for the day when faith turns to sight.

For Discussion

1. What is the significance of the city's perfect cube shape (Revelation 21:16)?

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2. How do the twelve gates and twelve foundations show the unity of God's people?


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3. What do the precious materials (gold, pearls, stones) teach us about heaven's glory compared to earthly wealth?

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4. Why is there no temple in the city, and what does it mean that the Lamb is its lamp?


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5. Which detail of the city's description gives you the most hope, and why?

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