

1. The city has a wall

1. **The city has a wall.** ¹²*It had a large and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates there were twelve angels. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of the people of Israel. The gates were evenly placed, three on each of four sides. ¹³On the east were three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.*

(i) Separation of those inside and outside

Ancient cities generally had walls. The wall spoke of (i) distinctiveness, separation. There was a difference between those who were in and those who were out of the city. The wall made the difference very clear. The wall gave (ii) protection. It kept away invaders. This city of God is distinctive, markedly different from human cities or sinful cities or the pagan cities of the ancient world. It is a place of great safety.

(ii) Protection

- The residents are the saved people of God

The residents of the city are the saved people of God. 'Israel' is used as a picture of God's people. (Literally speaking none of the twelve tribes is in existence any more. The tribal records were destroyed in AD 70.) 'Twelve tribes' is a way of saying that all the people of God are there.

2. The city has gates

2. **The city has gates.** There are gates on all sides (people from all directions have come into it). Angels guard the gates. No one can come in who is not qualified to do so.

3. The city is for the entire people of God

3. **The city is for the entire people of God.** This is emphasized in different ways. The edges of the cubic city are in length 12,000 'stadia' (the plural of 'stadion' – about 185 metres). The cubic city has twelve edges, so the total is 144,000 stadia. We recall that 144,000 is the number that symbolizes the total people of God. Also both the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles of the church are part of the basic existence of the city. There is no salvation except through faith in the promises of a Messiah given to the twelve tribes of Israel, and through the revelation given to the original twelve apostles. ¹⁴*The wall of the city had twelve supports, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Before he came, the promise of the Messiah was given to the twelve tribes of Israel. After he came, the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ was given first to the apostles (remember Matthew 16:13–20 and the twelve apostles' claim to clear understanding of the person of Jesus). The number 'twelve' is symbolic since Judas was a fraud from the beginning of his ministry. The saved people of God are built upon the original apostolic revelation. They are firm and stable because of their supports.*

- Dimensions total 144,000 'stadia' – represents the total number of the people of God

- Twelve tribes of Israel

- Twelve apostles

4. The city is exactly the fulfilment of God's intentions

4. **The city is exactly the fulfilment of God's intentions.** ¹⁵*The angel that talked with me had a golden measuring rod, with which to measure the city, its gates and its wall. The city has been built by God. A measuring rod is used by a builder who knows what he wants and has definite plans about his building. God's city is made to measure.*

5. The city is cubic

• ‘Foundations’ – visible supports above ground

• Cubic shape – stands for freedom and liberty

• Beauty of jewels represents everything sweet and attractive in God’s kingdom

5. The city is cubic! It is as high as it is wide and as it is long. ¹⁶The city is set out as a square, with its length and its breadth being equal in size. The angel measured the city with the measuring rod. The city was 12,000 units of size. Its length and breadth and height are the same. ¹⁷The angel measured the wall of the city, and it measured 144 cubits, by human measurement which the angel was using. ¹⁸The wall was built with jasper stone, and the city itself was pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹The supports of the wall of the city were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The ‘foundations’ of the wall (as it is often translated) are not invisible, below the ground. They are visible ‘supports’ – a heavy piece of stonework built alongside a wall to make it firm. *The first support was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald.* ²⁰The fifth was sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. ²¹And the twelve gates were twelve pearls. The city is one gigantic holy of holies – which was also cubic! The cubic shape stands also for freedom and liberty. ‘The Lord . . . set me in a large place’, says Psalm 118:5 (literally translated in the old King James Version of the Bible). The glistening beauty of twelve types of jewels speaks of everything in the kingdom of God which is sweet and attractive: the beauty of reconciliation with God, the shining attractiveness of love, the bright light of joy and purity and of a clean conscience.

6. The gates are precious; the streets are precious

• Represent the great treasures of the final stage of the kingdom of God

6. The gates are precious; the streets are precious. *Each one of the various gates was made of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.* The pearly gate and golden broad highway through the city speak of the great treasures and pleasures in the final stage of the kingdom of God. The city has a broad highway, a large open route that enables liberty and freedom of movement. It shines with gold. It has no pot-holes or ‘roadworks’. It is excellent and safe and beautiful. The language is still mysterious. ‘It does not yet appear what we shall be . . .’ It is all that was in paradise. Everything that unfallen Adam had will come back to us – and more.



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