

Study 45: Revelation 21:17-27

17 He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using.

- This is a thick wall. As we saw in the previous study, the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem are also high. This represents the fact that there is no way to “break into” the things of God, whether into the Church, eternal salvation or any of God’s blessings. By man’s measurement and perspective, it is an impossible task. Even the disciples asked Jesus how it was possible for **anyone** to be saved, especially the rich.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:23-26)

- It isn’t possible for man to conceive any plan that will earn him favor with God. But the thing that is impossible for man is possible for God.
- But think of this: If it is impossible for man to “break into” the things of God, it is also impossible for those inside these walls to ever be snatched away. Someone living in a city with high and thick walls is safe. You and I are safe in God’s hands. He is indeed a refuge for us! The word refuge is used 44 times just in the book of Psalms! Why not take some time and look up a few of those references? Then apply them to your life. Remember, the lessons of Revelation are not for the future; they are for today!
- There is no way into this impregnable city unless someone can find the door or gate. Do you know who that door is?

Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to (Luke 13:23-24).

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6).

All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture (John 10:8-9).

- All who came before Jesus, and by implication all who came after Him, who claimed to be spiritual leaders showing a way to favor with God are thieves and robbers. This isn't just referring to false Jewish messiahs pre-dating Jesus, but any world religious leader like Buddha who came before Jesus and made claims that they knew the way. They didn't and don't. There is only one who knows the way and that is because He is the way!
- The wall is also thick to keep enemies out. The Lord is able to protect His people from all harm.

I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you make the Most High your dwelling-- even the LORD, who is my refuge-- then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation." (Psalm 91:1-16)

- The walls that protect us are very secure and well built. Thank you, Lord!

18 The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass.

- While the walls are thick to keep intruders and enemies out, the walls are also transparent. The Church is not to function in obscurity, but is to act in such a way that mankind can behold the goodness of God through the deeds and behavior of the members.

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

- The world is watching the Church because God wants that to happen. What is the world seeing you and your church doing?
- The walls are also transparent because God's work in the world is obvious, although many choose to ignore it.

19 The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald,

20 the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoptase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.

- Foundations are important and the Bible has much to say about proper foundations. Here we see that the foundation of the Church and of the work of God is precious and priceless. That is because God Himself laid that foundation through Jesus. But let's examine some of the foundation verses firsthand:

When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do? (Psalm 11:3)

- When this priceless foundation is undermined, when Jesus' authority and position are lessened in someone's life, what can the righteous do? The implied answer is, "Nothing!"

The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock (Matthew 7:25).

- It seems to me that our personal foundations must be laid with the same material that John saw in his heavenly vision. What is the foundation for your life? Precious stones or your own works?

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work (1 Corinthians 3:10-13).

- Paul uses the building analogy and it is similar to what John saw. That is another reason why I don't think what John saw was simply a picture of heaven. What he saw pertained to the here-and-now reality of the Church.
- Fire will test your work, not to destroy it, (although that may happen), but to verify the reality of the foundation that God has laid in your life. Think of something that has happened to you recently. How would you have reacted to that 10 years ago? Perhaps not very well. The fact that this most recent problem hasn't destroyed you is because you have a better foundation today than 10 years ago. And with that in mind, what has happened to you has come to test and prove the reality of the good

things that God has deposited in your life. Hallelujah! That is why we can praise God for trials; they come to prove how real His work is in our lives.

Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20).

- If the apostles and prophets are the foundation, then think of how precious they are in God's sight, for the image that John saw of the Church's foundation was made of all kinds of precious stones. Yet the world despises what is precious in God's sight:

For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world (1 Corinthians 4:9-13).

- I hear many talking about the apostolic and prophetic. Are you one of them? If so, are you ready to endure the treatment that Paul described above to be apostolic or prophetic? Too many apostles and prophets want a life of honor and even luxury; Paul endured something totally different.

If I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

- The Church is the pillar and foundation of truth. Without the Church, there would be no truth, for the Church is the guardian and proclaimer of God's truth!

21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.

- Once again, we see John utilizing apocalyptic language. Can you imagine a pearl big enough to make one gate? I think not! This is exaggerated language to create an effect. But how is a pearl made inside an oyster? By a grain of sand being worked into something precious. While heaven and the Church are beautiful places, access to them is not without a great price that Jesus paid. We can think of Jesus' life as one, valuable pearl, developed by means of great pressure and stress.

22 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

- The Church isn't a building. The Church is a people among whom God lives! Buildings are important, but they are not the essence of the Church. People are.
- The tabernacle and temple were only shadows of what was to come: God creating a living building with His people. I know I am including a lot of cross references in this study, but I can't help it! These Revelation verses are stirring me to think of other passages. By looking at these, we are seeing how Revelation ties the whole Bible together in one neat summary and conclusion:

As you come to him, the living Stone-- rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him--you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. "Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone," and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message-- which is also what they were destined for. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (1 Peter 2:4-10).

- What place do you have in God's temple, His building? You have a purpose to live out as only you can live it.

23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

- We walk in the light of heaven, not the light that comes from men's understanding and wisdom. Once again, let's look at what the Bible has to say about this heavenly, godly light:

There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light (Matthew 17:2)

For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." (Luke 2:30-32)

In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself

was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world (John 1:4-9).

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God" (John 3:19-21).

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47).

24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.

- I don't think this means that whole nations will follow the Lord, but that large portions of nations or ethnic groups will find this light of God and follow it. I am not waiting or working to see entire nations disciplined to become followers of Jesus. I don't think (and this is my opinion) this will ever happen. But I think every nation or people group needs to hear and have a chance to respond to the gospel. Do you agree or disagree?

25 On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.

- Salvation is available to anyone, anywhere, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. No one will be shut out, if they come with a contrite heart. God is always vigilant to save and receive the lost. Praise the Lord!

26 The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

God sets the standards for entrance into His heavenly city and that standard is faith in His Son, Jesus. There are no other entrance passes or credentials. God controls the book of life and has the pen in His hand. He puts in the names that He determines meet the criteria, and the main criterion is faith!

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:6).