



PARTICIPANT HANDOUT: CLIFFHANGER

Session 6: Mount Zion

A Perfect Number

In Revelation, God said to the apostle John, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” (Revelation 21:6 NIV¹). In John’s magnificent vision, he describes in chapter 21 (NIV) the coming of the New Jerusalem:

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.”

(verses 1-3)

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits thick. The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.

I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 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. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.

(verses 9-24)

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What a glorious description! Twelve gates, twelve tribes, twelve foundations, twelve apostles, and twelve precious stones.

Now read God's instruction to his high priest Aaron, brother of Moses, from Exodus 28 (NIV):

“Fashion a breastpiece for making decisions—the work of skilled hands. Make it like the ephod: of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen. It is to be square—a span long and a span wide—and folded double. Then mount four rows of precious stones on it. The first row shall be carnelian, chrysolite and beryl; the second row shall be turquoise, lapis lazuli and emerald; the third row shall be jacinth, agate and amethyst; the fourth row shall be topaz, onyx and jasper. Mount them in gold filigree settings. There are to be twelve stones, one for each of the names of the sons of Israel, each engraved like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes.”

(verses 15-21)

“Whenever Aaron enters the Holy Place, he will bear the names of the sons of Israel over his heart on the breastpiece of decision as a continuing memorial before the LORD.”

(verse 29)

Do you see a pattern in the use of the number twelve? The number twelve is considered a perfect number in biblical study, symbolizing the authority of God, perfect governmental foundation, and completeness of Israel.² In Judaism, the number twelve symbolizes “perfect government, order, . . . united.”³

In the days of Aaron, the twelve tribes of Israel were still intact. Later, the tribes of Israel were split into two kingdoms: ten tribes in the Northern Kingdom and two tribes (Benjamin and Judah) in the Southern Kingdom.

John, in the Book of Revelation, presents us with a striking prophecy of completeness and order. In the New Jerusalem, the twelve tribes of Israel will be reunited, and their names will be inscribed as precious stones in the very foundations of the city. The Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, will restore to his creation the perfect unity of Eden. Jew and Gentile will live together in the Holy City that will be lighted by the glory of God and the Lamb.

Praise be to God!

² “Meaning of Numbers in the Bible: The Number 12,” Bible Study, accessed June 13, 2019, <https://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/meaning-of-numbers-in-bible/12.html>.

³ Kisha Gallagher, “Hebrew Numbers 11-30,” Grace in Torah, posted September 27, 2015, accessed June 14, 2019, <https://graceintorah.net/2015/09/27/hebrew-numbers-11-30/>.