

Revelation 21:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Analysis

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.... This verse from Revelation's vision of new heaven, new earth, new jerusalem - eternal state, god dwelling with his people employs apocalyptic imagery rich with Old Testament allusions and symbolic meaning. The Greek text uses vivid apocalyptic language characteristic of Jewish prophetic literature, drawing heavily from Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Zechariah.

The symbolism must be interpreted within its first-century context while recognizing timeless spiritual realities. The imagery would resonate powerfully with persecuted believers facing Roman imperial cult worship, providing hope that despite present suffering, Christ reigns sovereign and will consummate His kingdom. The apocalyptic genre uses symbolic numbers (seven, twelve, 144,000), colors, beasts, and cosmic imagery to convey theological truth rather than photographic descriptions.

Christologically, Revelation consistently exalts Jesus as the victorious Lamb, the faithful witness, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Every vision ultimately points to Christ's supremacy, His finished redemptive work, and His certain return to judge the living and dead and establish the new creation.

Historical Context

John received this revelation circa AD 95 during Domitian's persecution, exiled on Patmos for his testimony. The seven churches of Asia Minor faced increasing pressure to participate in emperor worship and pagan religious practices. Refusal meant economic hardship, social ostracism, and potential martyrdom. Understanding this context illuminates Revelation's encouragement to faithful endurance.

The apocalyptic genre was familiar to first-century Jewish and Christian readers. Rather than newspaper-style predictions, apocalyptic literature uses symbolic imagery to reveal spiritual realities behind earthly events, encourage the faithful, warn the unfaithful, and assert God's ultimate sovereignty over history. Parallels with Daniel, Ezekiel, and intertestamental apocalyptic writings would help original readers decode the symbols.

Rome's imperial cult demanded worship of Caesar as divine, placing Christians in impossible situations—compromise their faith or face persecution. Revelation identifies Rome as "Babylon" and assures believers that despite appearances, the Lamb conquered through His death and resurrection, and all earthly kingdoms will submit to His reign.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 21:14 reveal God's character, particularly His sovereignty, holiness, and justice?

2. What specific encouragement or warning does this verse offer for maintaining faithful Christian witness amid cultural pressure?
3. How does this passage point to Christ's victory and the hope of new creation, and how should that shape your present priorities?

Interlinear Text

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------|----------|-----------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| καὶ | τὸ | τείχος | τῆς | πόλεως | ἔχον | θεμελίους | δώδεκα |
| And | G3588 | the wall | G3588 | of the city | had | foundations | of the twelve |
| G2532 | | G5038 | | G4172 | G2192 | G2310 | G1427 |
| καὶ | ἐν | αὐτοῖς | ὀνόματα | τῶν | δώδεκα | ἀποστόλων | τοῦ |
| And | in | them | the names | G3588 | of the twelve | apostles | G3588 |
| G2532 | G1722 | G846 | G3686 | | G1427 | G652 | |
| ἀρνίου | | | | | | | |
| of the Lamb | | | | | | | |
| G721 | | | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 11:10 (Parallel theme): For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Ephesians 2:20 (Parallel theme): And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

Revelation 18:20 (Parallel theme): Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

Isaiah 54:11 (Parallel theme): O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.

Ephesians 3:5 (Parallel theme): Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

Matthew 16:18 (Parallel theme): And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Jude 1:17 (Parallel theme): But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

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