

Revelation 21:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

Analysis

The twelve foundation stones adorned with precious stones recalls the high priest's breastplate (Exodus 28:17-20) representing Israel's twelve tribes. Here they represent the twelve apostles (v. 14), showing the church's foundation is apostolic teaching. Each stone's unique color and beauty demonstrates diversity within unity. Reformed theology emphasizes Scripture's foundation for the church—apostolic witness recorded in New Testament. The precious stones represent the incalculable value of this foundation. The foundations' visibility (unlike earthly buildings) shows the church's basis is openly displayed.

Historical Context

Ancient foundations were typically hidden underground, but this city's foundations are visible and adorned, emphasizing transparency and glory. The twelve stones corresponding to twelve apostles established continuity between Christ's original apostles and the eternal church. Precious stone symbolism was familiar from temple imagery and prophetic visions.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the foundation's visibility and beauty challenge you to value and study the apostolic teaching on which the church is built?
2. What does the correspondence between foundation stones and apostles teach about the church's permanent grounding in New Testament revelation?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	οἱ	θεμέλιος	τοῦ	τείχους	τῆς	πόλεως	παντὶ
And	G3588	foundation	G3588	of the wall	G3588	of the city	all manner of
G2532		G2310		G5038		G4172	G3956
λίθω	τιμίῳ	κεκοσμημένοι·	ὁ	θεμέλιος	ὁ	πρῶτος	
stones	precious	were garnished with	G3588	foundation	G3588	The first	
G3037	G5093	G2885		G2310		G4413	
ἴασπις	ὁ	δεύτερος	σάπφειρος·	ὁ	τρίτος	χαλκηδών	
was jasper	G3588	the second	sapphire	G3588	the third	a chalcedony	
G2393		G1208	G4552		G5154	G5472	
ὁ	τέταρτος	σμάραγδος					
G3588	the fourth	an emerald					
	G5067	G4665					

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 3:15 (Parallel theme): She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.