

# The Unfathomable Nature of Heaven

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Revelation chapter 21 this morning we're going to continue our series on the reality of eternity and last week we spoke of the certainty of eternity it's coming whether you're ready for it or not I encourage you to be ready this week I want to talk about heaven particularly the unfathomable nature of heaven now the word unfathomable means incapable of being explored or understood impossible to measure the extent of so I'll tell you that I'm going to do my best today to describe to you some aspects of what heaven will be like but I promise you from the beginning it will not be sufficient the reality is the words of English cannot put or any other language cannot really explain to us the vast expanse of the glories of heaven but we get a glimpse of it in Revelation 21 of all places in scripture it's most clearly in Revelation 21 I want to begin to unpack that this morning it's in Revelation 21 beginning in verse 1 it says this then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more and I saw the holy city new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying behold the dwelling place of God is with man he will dwell with them they'll be his people and God himself will be with them as their God he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away and he who was seated on the throne said behold I am making all things new also he said write this down for these words are trustworthy and true and he said to me it is done I am the alpha and the omega the beginning and the end to the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment the one who conquers will have this heritage and I will be his God and he'll be my son but as for the cowardly the faithless the detestable as for murderers the sexually immoral sorcerers idolaters and all liars their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur which is the second death then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me saying come and I'll show you the bride the wife of the lamb and he carried me away in spirit to a great high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God having the glory of God its radiance like a most rare jewel like a like a jasper clear as crystal it had a great high wall with 12 gates and at the gates 12 angels and on the gates the names of the 12 tribes of the sons of

Israel were inscribed on the east three gates on the north three gates on the south three gates and on the west three gates and the wall of the city had 12 foundations and on them were the 12 names of the 12 apostles of the lamb and the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold measuring the city and its gates and walls the city lies four square its length the same as its width and he measured the city with his rod 12,000 stadia its length and its width and its height are equal he also measured its wall 144 cubits by human measurement which is also an angel's measurement the walls was built of jasper while the city was pure gold like clear glass the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel the first was jasper the second sapphire the third agate the fourth emerald the fifth onyx the sixth carnelian the seventh crystallite the eighth barrel the ninth topaz the tenth christophase the eleventh jason the twelfth amethyst and the 12 gates were 12 pearls each of the gates made of a single pearl and the streets of the city was pure gold like transparent glass and I saw no temple in the city for its temple is the lord god the almighty and the lamb and the city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it for the glory of god gives its light and its lamp is the lamb by its light will the nations walk and the kings of the earth be will bring their glory into it and its gates will never be shut by day there'll be no night there that will bring into the glory and the honor of the nations but nothing unclean will ever enter it nor anyone who does what is detestable or false but only those who are written in the lamb's book of life I want to share with you three things that you can look forward to but I realize that I don't have

time to share you three things so i'm going to show you two of them this morning two things that heaven has this morning first one is this unforeseen beauty in that city the unforeseen beauty of that city beginning in verse 11 we get the most clear picture in this life that we can have of heaven it says the glory of god will shine in that place brighter than the sun shines here shall be the glory of god there now what exactly does that mean well we'll have to get there to find out but i can give you some examples that point to it in exodus chapter 34 verse 29 do you remember when moises went up to mount sinai and he went up to mount sinai and received the 10 commandments from the lord i want you to listen to what this this was like for moises as he was in the presence of god it said when moises came down from mount sinai with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand and he came down from the mountain moises did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with god aaron and all the people of israel saw moises and behold the skin of his face shone and they were afraid to come near him but moises called to them and aaron and all the leaders of the

congregation returned to him and moises talked with them afterward all the people of israel came near and he commanded them all that the lord had spoken with him in mount sinai and when moises had finished speaking with them he put a veil over his face whenever moises went in before the lord to speak with him he would remove the veil until he came out and when he came out and told the people of israel what he was commanded the people of israel would see the face of moises that the skin of moises face was shining and moises would put the veil over his face until he went in to speak with him tell you what was happening moises was coming down covering his face because it glowed with the glory of god he had been in the presence unadulterated presence of god and from that he shone literally the glory of god let me give you another example it's in matthew chapter 17 it's at the transfiguration of jesus we pick up a few different signs of heaven here i want to touch on one it says after six days jesus took with him peter and james and john his brother led him up a high mountain by themselves and he was transfigured before them and his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light and behold there appeared to them moises and elijah talking with them and peter said to jesus lord it is good that we are here if you wish i will make three tents here one for you and one for moises and one for elijah he was still speaking when behold a bright cloud overshadowed them and a voice from the cloud said this is my son with whom i am well pleased listen to him when the disciples heard this they fell on their faces and were terrified but jesus came and touched them and said rise and have no fear and when they lifted up their eyes they saw no one but jesus only and as they were coming down the mountain jesus commanded them tell no one the vision until the son of man is raised from the dead i'll tell you what happened on the mount mount of transfiguration they were exposed to the glory of god the glory of god is the shine of heaven his glory illuminates heaven in revelation 21 verse 12 it tells us that there's a high wall around heaven that is a powerful symbol because walls were built around cities for security it was not to keep people in it was to keep harm out and the point of that is heaven is an eternally secure place that there is no fear in heaven there are no locks in heaven there's gates but they're always open there is no apprehension in heaven it describes the walls of heaven as made from most precious stones all which are colorful with brilliant hues and when you see how this book is translated from the original language to english you realize that we don't have words for some of these we find something similar the word may mean blue and so they find a jewel that's blue and place that word in there it is really truly beyond our comprehension and the point is when it stacks the walls with 12 different jewels of amazement it is magnificent beauty beyond the imagination of the human eye the book of revelation is a fascinating book it is also the most abused and misused book in all the bible it is fascinating and it is controversial and there are several characteristics that mark the book let me give you two of them that are relevant relevant for what we're doing today one of them is symbolism there's a ton of symbolism in revelation symbolic images that you can pick up on what they mean by looking at the context of the rest of scripture the second thing that you'll find that characterizes revelation is numerology and a lot of people take the numerology of revelation and run with it and go crazy with it and come up with formulas and all that stuff that are not in the bible they make it up just to be honest with you sells good books though there are four numbers however that are repeatedly used in scripture if you'll look at the multiples of of what we're looking at today you'll see these numbers used again and again four of them one of them is the number three now all of these numbers mean complete they mean perfect so you help me this morning why would the number three be considered a perfect number it's because of the trinity because the three in one one in three god that we serve the trinity points to perfection points

to completion the next number is the number seven now why would seven be a symbol of perfection do you know it's creation the world was created in seven days if you take the day of rest off you have the number six if you triple that number put it together three times you get six six six so if six is an evil number because you lay off the day of rest then three times more would be the number six six six for instance another perfect number that is mentioned is the is the number 10 why would 10 be significant because of the 10 commandments they represent the whole of the law they're not the whole of the law they represent the whole of the law so when you have the 10 commandments you cover the law of swords the last number and you see that quite a bit here is the number 12 and the reason why the number 12 is a symbolic number that's used again and again is because all of god's people in the old testament were made up in the 12 tribes so when you include the 12 gates you include all of god's people it's a powerful symbol now today those who are in christ are god's people so what this speaks of when it speaks of the tribes it speaks of the old israel god's chosen people but when you look at the foundation of those walls you'll see there's 12 foundations and what is upon those foundations but it's about the apostles names and so you also see the newest trail which are those who are in christ you see since the cross since the cross and the carrying out of the great commission all through christ are god's chosen children we all come through christ those before christ came in the hope of christ those since christ came because of what christ did we all come through christ now if you stumble on that i want you to notice that the foundation has the names of the apostles on it which means that the message in which the apostles preached is the foundation of what heaven stands on what is that that's the gospel that's the hope that we have heaven is made up of god's people and its foundation is the message of the apostles which is the gospel in those walls are gates how many 12 gates verse 21 says in the 12 gates were 12 pearls each of the gates made of a single pearl now i may make more of this than i ought to but i always had trouble as a kid when i heard people talk about people going through the pearly gates because when i heard people talk about the pearly gates what it sounded like to me was some saturday morning get together where you get a bunch of fake pearls and glue them together to come up with some ornate gate of sorts that you come through and that is not at all what it's speaking of i want you to notice that it makes the point to say that verse 21 says and the 12 gates were 12 pearls listen each of the gates made of a single pearl that is significant especially if you understand how a pearl is made a pearl is formed when a small grain of sand becomes embedded into an oyster and it begins to irritate that oyster and to soften that irritation the oyster coats that grain of sand with a smooth layer of mother of pearl is what it's called as long as it is an irritant it continues to coat it making it larger and larger and for those who are cracking open oysters looking for pearls they want a lot of irritation before they ever get to it because they want that pearl to be good size what kind of irritant would have been necessary to make pearls the size of forming gates now let me just give you an understanding here when we speak of the gates of these walls scripture says they are 144 cubits thick a cubic cubit is from the average man from his elbow to the tip of his third finger on my arm it's 18 inches and so it's safe to say that 144 cubits would at least be 200 feet the gates of the walls of heaven is described in scripture as 200 feet thick it must have been some type of irritation to make a pearl that big i mean it had to be tremendous suffering so what in the world does that mean well i believe the answer is found inside the question how can we get through the gate of heaven because of christ because of his sacrifice because his sacrifice coated over the irritant of our sin and these pearl gates represent the beauty of our entrance into heaven because of the suffering of christ that went before us not only does it talk about the gates but it says that the streets and the city are pure gold like transparent glass

[ 19 : 45 ] you ever seen gold that looked like transparent glass ladies if some fellow's trying to give you gold that looks like transparent glass i wouldn't take it okay but literally what this means is it is gold without impurity literally what this means is it describes the process of how gold is heated up and when gold is heated up impurities rise to the top and then that is removed off of that gold and therefore the better the gold you have the more impurities are removed never are all the impurities removed hopefully most have been removed however the point of it is there is no impurity in heaven therefore the appearance of the gold in heaven is like glass because all the impurities have been removed there is no impurity in heaven which means that this gold construction is transparent which is fitting because nothing is hidden in heaven and the pure gold is a treasure beyond any that this world can bring it also speaks of the size of heaven the size of heaven is identified as four square and when it's identified as four square if you take the measurements and of 12,000 stratia and you change that to our measurements today it means that heaven is 1400 miles on each side it also

means that heaven is 1400 miles high 1400 miles that is from Canada to Mexico that is from the Atlantic Ocean to the Rocky Mountains if you take that height because it's a cube if you take that height into consideration it would accommodate 20 billion people each having a 75 acre cube or room or mansion and the point of that is thank God there's room in heaven

John 14 1 through 3 says this let not your hearts be troubled you believe in God believe also in me and my father's house are many rooms if it were not so would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and will take you to myself that where I am you may be also some of you do not like that translation and the reason why you don't like that translation is because they have ripped the mansion out and put a room in I often use this passage at funerals and I always read the New King James Version because I ain't about to tell people at a funeral that they're going to a room they've been waiting on a mansion all this time let me tell you why that's different it's because over the last 400 years and more we've been able to come to a better understanding of the New Testament language

Koine Greek is a dead language nobody speaks it and so what we get from it now is from archival information and the more documents that are dug up and the older the documents are that are dug up and the more you see the language used and how it is used the better understanding that you have and the reality is the word there in the Greek that was translated mansion years ago is really normally used more like a manse which would be a house or a dwelling place or even a room of sorts the point is there is room for all it goes on to tell us that there's no sun there's no star there's no night God the Father and His Son Christ are there they are all the light we need and I take you back to Matthew 17 I take you back to the passage in Exodus that speaks of the shine that came from those who had just been in the presence of God not God Himself the gates are always open ready to receive more can you imagine the beauty of heaven no no you can't it is beyond anything we can comprehend we have no idea not only is there unimaginable beauty of heaven but I want you to also see this morning the unimaginable reunion with the saints the unimaginable reunion with the saints

Hebrews 12 23 tells us that when we turn to God we have come to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven and to God the judge of all and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect I want you to hear me this morning listen if you're a child of God scripture says your name is written in the Lamb's book of life that is the way scripture puts the registration of heaven when you give your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ you're registered and you will not arrive late you'll be right on time God will send for you on time and when he does you will be with fellow saints of God that are already there people ask me will we know each other of course we'll know each other we'll know each other more than we do now now how do I know that well if you look back at Matthew 17 verse 3 that we looked at earlier it says in verse 3 that and behold there appeared to them

Moses and Elijah talking with them with Moses and Elijah talking with Christ at the Mount of Transfiguration Peter, James and John were looking on and they recognized Moses and Elijah now I want you to think about that for a moment folks Peter, James and John did not have one of those green covered Bibles that we had as a kid where you open it up when you get to the Moses passage and it shows the Charlton Heston standing in front of the burning bush they didn't have that they didn't have portraits of Moses they didn't have portraits of Elijah they don't know what them men looked like they know Elijah wore funky clothes but they don't know that but instantly they recognized them no pictures they didn't know what they looked like they had an intuitive knowledge listen when I get to glory

[ 27 : 40 ] I'm going to be thin and buff and good looking and you're still going to know who I am it's going to be amazing how? because of intuitive knowledge if Peter, James and John recognized those they had never seen don't you dare doubt that you'll not be able to recognize those that you have seen how?

I don't know but I'll know then because 1 Corinthians 13 verse 12 says this now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror then we shall see face to face now I know in part then I shall know fully even as I am fully known oh my friend it will all become clear instantly when we get there until then we just see through a glass dimly George W. Truitt pastored the First Baptist Church of Dallas for half of the 20th century the first half of the 20th century somebody in the church had a baby and George W. Truitt went to the hospital to see that baby to visit that family and the father came out with the baby and when the father came out with the baby

Truitt began to cry the father asked him why and Truitt said I was just thinking about your beautiful family and I realized that all of you will not be in heaven I realized that all the rest of your family will be but you won't be how sad I love to think about the glories of heaven the beauty of the city and the opportunity that we have to be in the greatest reunion that we could ever imagine thank God that for the Christian heaven will be a reunion like you've never seen let me just be blunt today what about you are you ready have you nailed your salvation down

God gave us his words so that we would know John writes in both big John the gospel of John and the little John in first John he says I've written these things that you may know that you have eternal life folks I want you certain this morning has there ever been a time in your life when you've asked the Lord Jesus to come into your life and to forgive you of your sins and to cleanse you and to change you if that's never happened to you I promise you today's the day of salvation if you feel any yearning at all to come to him it's not from you it's because of him his Holy Spirit has initiated that and you have a responsibility to respond to that in obedience I'd love to guide you in that process and we're going to stand in just a moment and we're going to sing and when we do I encourage you to come say pastor I'd love to give my heart and life to the Lord

Jesus Christ or maybe you have done that you've never let anybody else know that publicly I mean maybe a few in the family know or something like that but you've never publicly acknowledged that Jesus by his commission and by his example tell us that we are to acknowledge that through baptism hey and I got good news for you if you've never acknowledged that through baptism we have an opportunity in Lake Chiliwater this afternoon you have a wonderful opportunity and it's not too late I promise you if you've never acknowledged your salvation publicly through baptism you come you come whether today works out or not you come and make that right publicly before us and before the Lord maybe you're here and God's drawing you to be a part of this fellowship I'm telling you the sweetest times that Pickens First Baptist Church will ever have will only simply be a foretaste of what we have to look forward to

[ 32 : 22 ] I highly anticipate this afternoon I think we're going to have a wonderful glorious time together we're going to celebrate the birth of Christ moving and working in the lives of folks the birth of a Christian excuse me working and moving in their lives and we're going to celebrate with them I mean if one of our college football teams won a national championship we'd drive wherever we had to go fight as much traffic as we had to fight stand in whatever kind of weather we had to stand to cheer them on and it'd only be a temporary title it'd be put in some case and people could go by and look at it later those players would graduate grow old and fat like the rest of us but when somebody gives their heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ they're forever changed for all of eternity we ought to cheer like it matters when they acknowledge that publicly we ought to be in their crowd thank God there's a great cloud of witnesses I'll talk about one morning that's also cheering us on but we have a responsibility to cheer one another on what an opportunity we have and then to eat together what a great opportunity for that but I'm telling you the sweetest reunions we ever have in this church is just a foretaste of what it's going to be like when we see them face to face

God's drawing you to our congregation you come we'd love to guide you in that process God's blessing us in mighty ways God's doing a move I have no way to describe it except that God's chosen to put his hand upon us and work in us in mighty ways I thank God lives are being changed if you feel led to be a part of that you come maybe you're here this morning and there's barriers in your life that you need to lay down before the Lord you know you're a Christian but there's things in your life you're ashamed of things that you need to confess and you need to walk away from in the power of the Holy Spirit of God he gives us the strength to do that he also gives us folks to encourage us along the way I'll be happy to walk with you through your journey and encourage you along the way you just obey God as he speaks to your heart and life Lord Jesus I love you and I thank you for the opportunity you give us today to celebrate you to live for you to dedicate our lives to you dear God to publicly confess you to join in with your believers Father God help us to simply be obedient right now of exactly what you'd have us to do nothing more or nothing less bless our efforts oh God I pray in Jesus precious name

Amen