

*The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 10 May 2026. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.*

## **The Architecture of Heaven**

Probably most of you have heard of the book *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which was written by a Baptist pastor named **John Bunyan** in the 1600's. If you don't know what *Pilgrim's Progress* is about, it is an allegory of the Christian life. At the beginning of the story, a man named **Graceless** is living in a town called the **City of Destruction**; and he is greatly troubled by a huge burden on his back, which he cannot remove, no matter how hard he tries. But then, he finds a curious book, which he begins to read. By reading this book—and by receiving guidance from that book by a man named **Evangelist**—Graceless discovers how he can get to a place called the **Wicket Gate**, and to a hill called **Calvary**, where, he is told, his burden will fall from his back. Graceless follows these instructions, and goes to the gate, and to Calvary; and there, at the foot of a cross on top of that hill, his burden falls off. He is there given the new name “**Christian.**” He is also given pure, white garments to wear. He becomes a citizen of the Kingdom of Zion; and he embarks upon a straight and narrow road, which leads to a place called the **Celestial City**, where the King of Zion lives. All these things are a picture of a lost person's finding salvation in Jesus Christ, and then embarking on a new life. When a sinner believes on Christ, the guilt and penalty of his sin are removed; he becomes a citizen of the Kingdom of God; and he is clothed in Christ's righteousness. He begins to walk on the Way of eternal life; and at the end of this Way is the city of **New Jerusalem**—the heavenly city that God has prepared for all who believe on His Son.

Now, as Christian was travelling one day, he met a fellow pilgrim named **Hopeful**. Hopeful became his closest friend; and as they travelled together, they met with many scoffers and enemies of their King. One of these scoffers was a man named **Atheist**. When Faithful and Hopeful met Atheist, Atheist was walking *toward* them (which means that he was walking *away from* the Celestial City). Atheist asked Christian and Hopeful where they were going; and when they told him that they were travelling to Mount Zion, Atheist burst into a fit of laughter. He said, “I laugh to see what ignorant persons you are. . . . There is no such place as you dream of in all this world.” Atheist then went on to tell them that he himself had sought for Mount Zion for twenty years of his life, but had never found any such place; and now, he said, “I am going back again, and will seek to refresh myself with the things that I then cast away.” In other words, he was going back to his old life, to “party it up” while he still could.

There are many people in this world who are just like that character Atheist. In the past, they considered themselves Christians, and cleaned up their lives, and seemingly lived *like* a Christian for many years. However, over time, they lost their belief in God, came out as atheists, and went back to a life of sin. Even many one-time *pastors* have stopped believing in God, and in Heaven, and have returned to sinful life. And why? I believe the character Atheist reveals the real reason. Remember what he said? He said, “I. . . will seek to **refresh myself** with the things that I [once] cast away.” In other words, he never stopped loving sin! The reason that many former “believers” are now atheists is that they never truly desired to depart from sin, and to let Jesus to be the King of their lives. They were never truly saved; and when

their attempt to live the life of a Christian got too hard (which was bound to happen, since Christ was never in their lives), they went back to the sinful things that they had never truly abandoned.

To those who have never known the Lord, Heaven *is* an impossible place. The internet today is filled with the bitter rants of would-be philosophers who explain to us why Heaven is “impossible.” Even to many people who *do* profess belief in Heaven, Heaven is not real to them, because their real love is this present world. But for the believer, Heaven is *very* real, because it is the city of their God. In fact, everything *about* Heaven reminds believers of their God, and of their relationship with Him. As we will see this morning, even the *architecture* of Heaven tells the beautiful story of redemption, and of God’s relationship with His people. The title of this morning’s message is ***The Architecture of Heaven***.

**Read Revelation 21:9-21.**

### **I. The blueprints of New Jerusalem**

In **Revelation 21** and **22**, the Apostle John gives us the most detailed and stunning description of Heaven that is to be found in the entire Bible. As we read this passage, several truths about the city of New Jerusalem stand out. First, the New Jerusalem is **an unspeakably holy place**. This is to be expected, since Heaven is the abode of God, who is utterly holy. Secondly, the New Jerusalem is **beautiful beyond our wildest imagination**. Thirdly, the architecture of the New Jerusalem is filled with powerful **spiritual symbols**: and these symbols all have to do with *God’s relationship with His redeemed people*.

It should come as no surprise that the blueprints of Heaven are filled with symbols depicting God’s relationship with man. After all, Heaven was built by the God who loves us more than we can possibly comprehend. The Builder of the heavenly City sacrificed that which was dearest to Himself, so that we might be reconciled to Him. God the Father sent His only beloved Son down into this world to die on an old, rugged cross, so that He might pay for our sins, and make it possible for us to be saved from His wrath. Why *wouldn’t* the God who loves us that much fill Heaven with *reminders* of His love for us?

Now, to get a better grasp on this truth, let’s consider the Temple in the Old Testament. The Temple was *not* just a beautiful building that men dreamed up. Though the Temple *was* an earthly building, and though Moses, David, and Solomon did oversee the building of it, its *blueprints* came from Heaven. In **Exodus 25**, God commanded Moses to make all the vessels of the Tabernacle after the pattern that *He* had given on Mount Sinai. In **1 Chronicles 28**, David confirmed that the blueprints for the Temple had been given to him “*by the spirit*” of God. Also, in **Hebrews 9**, Paul says that “*the holy places made with hands*” (in other words, the rooms of the earthly Temple) were actually the “*figures of the true*” Temple, which is in Heaven. In other words, the earthly Temple was a small replica of the Temple in Heaven; and its purpose was to teach Israel truths about God, and about their relationship with Him.

What, then, does the architecture of the Temple teach us? And how should we *respond* to these truths? Let's see what God said about this.

**Read Ezekiel 43:10-11.**

In **Ezekiel 40-48**, God gave the prophet Ezekiel an extremely detailed vision. In this vision, God revealed what the Temple will look like during the future 1,000-year reign of Christ. God described the blueprints of the enormous Temple complex so precisely, that many people over the years have made architectural drawings of the Temple, based on Ezekiel's description; and the drawings that people come up with usually look virtually identical. It doesn't matter if the person drawing it is a born-again Christian, or a Jewish rabbi: the maths is so precise, that any honest student of the text of Scripture will come up with the same basic drawing. Yet, *what was the point* of these Temple blueprints? Why did God go to such lengths to describe His future Temple? **Because the layout of the Temple teaches us spiritual truths.** In fact, the spiritual meaning of the Temple layout is so clear, that God expected the people of Israel to *repent of their sins* when they heard the fashion of it! God told Ezekiel, ***"Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities."***

That's interesting, isn't it? Why would an architectural drawing of the Temple cause a Jewish person (or *any* person) to be ashamed of his sin, *repent* of his sin, and turn to God? Simply this: the Temple is filled with prophetic pictures of **the Lord Jesus Christ**; of **salvation**; and of **Christ's relationship** with those whom He has saved. *Every* Temple in Israel's history has been filled with these pictures. The **gate** and the **wall** around the Temple Courtyard was a picture of salvation. Just inside the gate of the courtyard, the bronze **altar of sacrifice**, where the lambs were slain and burnt, was a picture of Christ's sacrifice for our sins. After the altar, there was the **brass laver**, where the priests washed their hands and feet before going into the Sanctuary. This is a picture of the daily cleansing from sin that God gives to believers through His Word, and through the Holy Spirit. Next came the building called **the Sanctuary**, which was divided into two parts—the **Holy Place**, and the **Holy of Holies**. The Holy Place was a picture of the *close communion* that every believer can have with God. Within this Holy Place, the seven-branched **golden candlestick** was a picture of the wisdom and understanding that the Holy Spirit gives to believers. The golden **Table of Shewbread**, with its 12 pieces of unleavened bread on it, was a picture of the believer's communion with Christ, who is the Bread of Life. The golden **altar of incense** that stood between the candlestick and the table of shewbread was a picture of believers' prayers to God. The **thick veil** that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was a picture of Christ's body, which was broken on the cross. (That is why God *tore that veil in half* at the moment when Jesus cried, ***"It is finished."***) Finally, the golden **Ark of the Covenant** on the other side of the veil, in the room called the **Holy of Holies**, was a picture of the very throne of God the Father. Together, all these pieces of furniture were a picture of *salvation* through Christ's sacrifice; of the believer's *daily cleansing* from sin; and of the *close fellowship* that believers can have with the Father, the

Son, and the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, the Temple pictures the privilege that believers have, through Christ's sacrifice, to go to the throne of God in prayer.

But that's not all. The grandest part of this whole picture is the *shape* that all these pieces of Temple furniture formed. When you look at the whole Temple layout, you can see clearly that all these pieces of Temple furniture *formed a giant cross!* But that's not all. In the future Millennial Temple, the *buildings* of the Temple complex will form a shape, too. In the Millennial Temple, there will be many extra buildings that were not in the original Temple; and these buildings will form a **huge cross**. And when I say "huge," I mean "huge"! In **Ezekiel 42**, we are told that the entire Temple complex will be foursquare; and the wall on each side of the complex will be 500 cubits long. That is **875 feet**, or **266 metres!** Imagine looking down from a helicopter, and seeing this massive Temple complex; and cutting right through the centre of this square complex is the shape of a cross!

Do you see why God expects Israel to *repent* after seeing the "**measure and pattern**" of the Temple? Even in the centuries *before* Christ came down to earth, the Jews would have understood *enough* of the spiritual pictures in the Temple to see their need of salvation. However, ever since Christ died and rose again, these pictures of redemption have been crystal clear. The very architecture of the Temple cries out to the Jewish people to repent and believe on their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Yet, most of them still refuse to believe on their Messiah.

You know what, though? The architecture of the Temple doesn't speak only to the Jews: it speaks to *every one of us*. In order to enter into the walls of salvation, we *all* must go through the "gate" of the Lord Jesus Christ, and go to the "altar" of the cross, and believe on the one who suffered on that cross for us! Then, after receiving salvation, we must daily be cleansed of sin, and submit to the Holy Spirit, and fellowship with Christ through His Word, and talk to God in prayer. This is what God wants for *all of us*. He wants to redeem us from our sins, so that we can have a relationship with Him!

Now, I've taken a good deal of time to talk about the architecture of the *Temple*; and perhaps you're beginning to wonder what this has to do with the architecture of the city of Heaven. Well, first of all, there is (at least, for now) a Temple *in* Heaven; and all the spiritual pictures in the *earthly* Temple are also to be found in the *Heavenly* Temple. (We'll talk more about Heaven's Temple in next week's message.) However, my main point here is that just as the heavenly *Temple* is filled with pictures of God's relationship with His people, so the *entire city of Heaven* is filled with such pictures!

We shouldn't be surprised that the New Jerusalem is filled with spiritual pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of His relationship His redeemed people of all ages. In **Revelation 21**, we are specifically told that the New Jerusalem lies "**foursquare**," and that it is as tall as it is long

and wide. In other words, Heaven's walls form a giant cube. These walls are absolutely massive! One "furlong" is about 582 feet; thus, the length, width, and height of Heaven's walls (which is 12,000 furlongs each) comes to about 1,322 miles each! (To put that in perspective, the city of Heaven would take up the greater part of the continent of Europe, and about half the length of the continental United States!) We also read in **Revelation 21** that the width of the walls is **144 cubits**. A cubit is 18 inches; thus, the width of Heaven's walls is **216 feet**. God didn't randomly choose these dimensions: He had a *purpose* in them. All of these measurements are filled with spiritual pictures; and we are about to find out what they are. This brings us to our next point.

## II. The meaning of the blueprints of New Jerusalem

What do the measurements of the New Jerusalem teach us? Well, the first thing you'll notice about these measurements is that all of them are based on **the number 12**. Now, why is that important? Because throughout the Bible, the number 12 is used as a symbol of **God's relationship with His people**. In the Old Testament Scriptures, Jacob had **12 sons**; and these 12 sons became the fathers of the **12 tribes of Israel**, with whom God established a special covenant relationship. There were **12 precious stones** on the high priest's breastplate, which he wore all day long in the Temple; and these 12 stones represented the fact that Christ, the true High Priest of Israel, holds the tribes of Israel continually upon His heart. There were also **12 pieces of bread** on the Table of Shewbread in the Temple; and those 12 pieces of bread represented God's fellowship with the twelve tribes of Israel. Just as a family has fellowship with each other as they sit around the dinner table, so Christ wants to have fellowship with *His* spiritual family, as they "dine" upon His precious Word.

Now, we don't have time this morning to look at all the places where the number "12" is used in the Old Testament; but I would like to take a moment to focus on a couple of them.

**Read Exodus 28:15-29 and 25:23-30.** [In **Leviticus 24:5**, God specified that the priests were to make "*twelve cakes*" of bread, and lay them out on the Table of Shewbread continually.]

As you can see, the number "12" is extremely important to the Jewish people. Yet, how does it apply to us Gentile believers living in the church age? Well, first of all, if you have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, Christ is not only the High Priest of Israel. He is *your* High Priest; and you yourself are a priest, serving Him day and night. It doesn't matter whether you are Jew or Gentile: if you have believed on Christ, you have been made a partaker of salvation, which was promised in the New Covenant. God made the New Covenant with Israel; but its spiritual blessings apply to *everyone* who believes on Christ. Those precious gems on the high priest's breastplate remind us that the tribes of Israel are on God's heart continually; but they

also remind us that *we who believe on Christ* are on His heart continually. The Table of Shewbread applies to both Jews and Gentiles, as well. Jesus said, ***“I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth in me shall never thirst.”*** The priests who ate the twelve pieces of unleavened bread were a picture of *all* believers in Christ. Just as the Old Testament priests ate the unleavened bread, so believers today “eat” the Bread of Life by believing Christ’s words, and trusting in Him.

Now, what about the *New Testament*? Is the number “12” important in this New Testament age? Absolutely! At the beginning of this New Testament age, **Jesus chose 12 men to be His Apostles**; and He commissioned these 12 men to lay the foundation of the churches through their preaching and testimony. Of course, one of these 12 men betrayed Christ, and died in disgrace; but God appointed **Matthias** to take his place. Why was it so important to keep the number of Apostles at “12”? Because the number 12 represents God’s relationship with His people! In the Old Testament age, there were 12 patriarchs, who represented God’s people covenant people Israel; and in this New Testament age, there are 12 Apostles, who represent God’s people in *this* dispensation. The names of the 12 Patriarchs of Israel, and the names of the 12 Apostles, will be written on the very structure of the New Jerusalem for all eternity. In Heaven, believers from the Old Testament age will look at the 12 gates of pearl, and read the names of the 12 sons of Jacob that are written on those gates, and will remember how God redeemed them to be His people. Likewise, believers from the New Testament age will look at the 12 foundations of precious stones, and will see the names of the 12 Apostles written on them; and every time they see those names, they will remember how God redeemed *them* to be His people. Even in the future seven-year Tribulation period, God will raise up 144,000 Jewish witnesses, from each of the 12 tribes of Israel, to preach the Gospel throughout the world. These 144,000 men will represent all believers who placed their faith in Christ during the Tribulation period. The 144-cubit thick wall of New Jerusalem will remind the Tribulation saints of how God redeemed *them* to be His people.

### **Read Revelation 7:2-8 and 14:1-5.**

The New Jerusalem abounds with 12’s—the 12 gates of pearl, with the names of the 12 patriarchs of Israel written on them; the 12 foundations of precious stones, with the names of the 12 Apostles written on them; the 12,000-furlong length of the walls; and the 144-cubit thickness of the walls. These “12-based” measurements symbolise the fact that all who believe on Jesus Christ are part of God’s holy people, regardless of what ethnicity or dispensation of history they lived in. The city of New Jerusalem itself is called Christ’s “wife,” because this city is the place where Christ’s Bride (the redeemed of all ages) will dwell with Him forever. In fact, at the end of the world, after God has destroyed this sin-cursed universe, He will create a *new* heaven and a new earth, in which there will be no trace of sin or the curse. God will then bring the city of New Jerusalem down to the new Earth, and will cause it to rest upon it. John saw this incredible sight in vision, and described it for us.

**Read Revelation 21:1-3, 9-10.**

God’s proclamation that “*the tabernacle of God is with men*” reveals what Heaven is really all about. Heaven is about God’s “pitching His tent” with His people forever, and having unending fellowship with them. Heaven isn’t merely about streets of gold, gates of pearl, or walls of jasper: it is about God’s residing with redeemed men and women for all eternity. God redeems sinners to Himself so that they might enjoy His presence for ever and ever, in the land where there is no sorrow, crying, pain, death, or evil.

Now, to those who don’t know the Lord, the thought of Heaven is not only preposterous: for most of them, it is actually undesirable. Most people actually think of Heaven as *boring*. Take, for example, what one atheist says in his blog, as he attempts to “prove” that Heaven is logically “impossible.” He says, “A land of eternal bliss would be devoid of volition and ambition. Why make plans? You can’t possibly improve on perfect bliss. Therefore, you can never experience accomplishment. You can never be relieved that you escaped some peril. You can never hope for anything different, or better. You’ll never have any new stories to tell. In fact, you’ll have all day everyday to talk with your ‘friends’...but none of you will have anything to say. You won’t talk about plans or goals, since you’ll have neither. You won’t have anything to report except how joyful you are. Your mind, being incapable of any emotion but joy, will be effectively and divinely lobotomized.”

Folks, the man who wrote those words has no understanding of what Christians mean when they say, “*For me to live is Christ.*” To the true child of God, life isn’t about “me”: it is about *Christ!* The citizens of Heaven won’t be sitting around for all eternity talking with their friends: they’ll have *work* to do. At the end of **Revelation 21** (which we will examine in coming weeks), we are told that “*The kings of the earth*” will go in and out of the city, and will bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. That word “*king*” implies rulership—and *duties*. There will be plenty of work to for God’s people do—not only in the city of New Jerusalem, but also in the New Earth—just as God had plenty of work for Adam to do in the Garden of Eden. Brethren, make no mistake: we *will* have new goals and accomplishments. However, the *purpose* of our goals and accomplishments will *not be to bring glory to self*, but to bring *glory to the King of Kings*. That is our purpose in *this* life; and it will be our purpose in eternity, too. And as for “perils” that have been escaped, we will be forever praising the Lord Jesus for saving our souls, and for snatching us from sin, death, and Hell. A lost person’s sense of worth is in doing things that glorify *self*; but in Heaven, believers will *serve the Lord* with a joyful heart, and will seek to bring glory to Him for all eternity! Why? Because they *love* Him. As the Apostle John said, “*We love him because he first loved us.*”

### III. The impossibility of the New Jerusalem

**(Read Revelation 21:15-16.)** When you take a close look at the blueprints of New Jerusalem, it soon becomes evident that in *this present* world—in the physical world that we know—the New Jerusalem would be impossible. A 1,322-mile high wall would be impossible, even if the thickness of the wall were much greater. The laws of physics (as we know them in this present world) demand that the wall would crush under its own weight. The width of the wall is so incredibly miniscule compared its height, that it is like building the Freedom Tower in New York City with walls much thinner than a piece of notebook paper! Then, there is the *weight* of the City to consider. I once discussed the dimensions of the New Jerusalem with a friend who was preparing to write a book on the subject; and he told me that when he asked a physicist friend how large the New Earth will need to be in order to support a 1,322-mile cube-shaped city, he said that according to our known laws of physics, it would be impossible. He said that something of that weight would turn any rock under it into molten lava.

Obviously, the New Heavens and New Earth will not be bound by the same laws of physics that we know in our current heavens and earth. (We know that the second law of thermodynamics won't exist in the new heaven and earth either, because there will be no entropy, and no death.) To us, such a city, and such a world, seems impossible. Yet, isn't such a city exactly what we would expect from the Almighty God who created it? God Himself is beyond our comprehension. He is eternally existent, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, immutable, and sovereign; and He is three Persons in one. I can barely wrap my head around any of these attributes of God; yet, I believe and receive these truths about God because *God has thus revealed Himself in His Word*. Likewise, the city that God has built for His people is impossible to human reasoning; yet, God's people believe these things, because they have been revealed to us by the God who cannot lie.

When you think about it, the city of New Jerusalem is like salvation itself. God's plan of salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ seems fantastic and unreasonable to the soul that does not know Christ. The Apostle Paul said that ***“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”*** Make no mistake about it, my friends: salvation is *not* natural; it is supernatural. To men, it is impossible: but to *God*, it is totally possible. God is able to take selfish, wicked rascals like us, who have no love for God, or desire to serve Him, and make us into new creations, bent on loving and serving Him!

**Read Mark 10:23-27.**

**Invitation:** My friends, the same God who made an “impossible” salvation possible has also made an “impossible” eternal home possible—for those who will have it! All who have repented of their sin and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ are citizens of Heaven. As we close this morning, I would ask, “Are *you* a citizen of Heaven? Do you *know* for certain that you are saved—that all your sins have been washed away?” If you are not sure that you are saved, I urge you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ this morning, and become part of God’s family! Should you be saved already, I urge you to keep your eyes on things above. Heaven is your real home, Christian. Abraham ***“looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God.”*** If Abraham (who didn’t have nearly as much revelation about Heaven as we have) was excited about going to the heavenly City of God, how much more excited should *we* be? Christian, never forget that you are a stranger and sojourner here! This world is *not* your home! Keep your eyes on the King of Zion, and live your life for Him!