

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 17 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 Worship in Heaven

From 1923 to 1980, an evangelist named **John R. Rice** travelled all around America preaching the Gospel, and winning thousands of souls to Christ. Doctor Rice preached the Gospel to the lost with boldness and power; and he urged Christians to flee from compromise and worldly living. He preached hard against booze, smoking, gambling, fornication, pornography, immodest dress, Jazz and Rock music, dance halls, Hollywood movies, the cinema, worldly television shows (which are virtually 100% of the shows on television), and the false “science” of evolution. Many people (including many prominent “clergy”) hated and mocked him; but many others repented of their sin, placed their faith in Christ, and served God for the rest of their lives, as the result of his clear, uncompromising Gospel preaching.

Now, if I were to summarise the main themes of Dr. Rice’s sermons, I would say that they were **sin, salvation, Heaven, and Hell**. He was constantly preaching about Heaven and Hell, because he believed, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that *everyone* is born into this world already on the downward path to Hell—and that Jesus is the only One who can snatch sinners from the path to Hell, and place them on the path to Heaven. He was a heavenly-minded man. He once told the story of the day when his step-grandfather went to be with the Lord. In the last days before his death, he asked his daughters to sing the beloved hymns that he had sung for most of his life; and though his voice was feeble, he sang along with them. However, he and his daughters weren’t the only ones singing in that bedroom. At one point, he told his daughters that he heard angels singing in the room; and he knew that they were preparing to take him home to Heaven. As Dr. Rice wrapped up this beautiful account of his grandfather’s homegoing, he posed the question, “Were these simply the imaginations of a delirious man? Had his mind grown feeble? Was he beside himself? No! No! Multiplied thousands have come down to death’s door, and have told their loved ones that they heard the voices of angels, or that they saw angels in the room.”¹

Now, I’ve never been at a believer’s bedside in the last hours of his life; thus, I’ve never personally witnessed this kind of scene. However, I know brothers and sisters in Christ who *were* with a saved loved one at the time of death, and who can testify that their loved one *did* see or hear angels singing in the last moments of life. Now, that’s interesting, isn’t it? Why is it that when God permits believers to see or hear angels before their death, the angels are often *singing*? **Because God created angels to worship Him!** During the week when God was creating the heavens and the earth, **“The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.”** To this hour, angels continually sing and worship their Creator—both in Heaven, and down here on earth. But guess what? *We* were created for the purpose of worshipping God, too; and someday, we who know the Lord will join the angels in singing praises to God in Heaven! We will be worshipping the Lord for all eternity, in one form or another—

whether by singing, or by serving God in some capacity. This morning, we will be talking about this matter of heavenly worship. The title of this message is *“The Worship of Heaven.”*

Read Revelation 21:15-22.

I. The present Temple in Heaven

In last week’s message, we read this same passage of Scripture; and as we read through this passage, we focused on the **architecture** of the New Jerusalem. We saw that the city’s numbers and measurements (which are all based on the number 12) are symbolic of God’s relationship with His redeemed people. There were 12 Patriarchs of Israel, and 12 Apostles for this church age; and there will be 144,000 witnesses during the Tribulation period, and so on. Throughout history, God has used the number “12” as a symbol of **fellowship between Himself and His Bride** (all who believe on Him).

However, there is one more aspect of the city’s architecture that we need to examine closely. As we’ve already seen, the city is **12,000 furlongs** (or **1,322 miles**) long, wide, *and* high. In other words, Heaven is a gargantuan golden *cube*. Now, why does the New Jerusalem have this perfect cubical shape? Does this mean anything? Yes, it does! Let’s go back to the Old Testament, and look at the blueprints of the Old Testament Temple.

Read 1 Kings 6:14-20.

You’ll notice that in **verses 19 and 20**, the word **“oracle”** is used twice. But what *is* an **“oracle”**? Well, the Hebrew word for “oracle” it is *debiyr*; and *debiyr* is based on the word *daver*; which means “to speak.” This word *debiyr*, then, refers to a *sacred place* where God speaks to His people, and gives them revelation.

What, then, was the sacred place where God spoke to the children of Israel audibly, and gave them revelation? It was the **Holy of Holies**—the room of the Temple where the Ark of the Covenant rested. The Ark of the Covenant was an earthly symbol of the throne of God in Heaven; and the room in which the Ark rested was a symbol of God’s heavenly throne room. It was the place where God often spoke audibly to Israel, to give them instruction and guidance. For example, in **Numbers 7:89**, we are told that when **Moses** went into the tabernacle, **“He heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims.”** Likewise, when **Joshua** and the **elders** of Israel were praying toward the Sanctuary, and pleading with God to reveal to

them why Israel had been defeated in battle, God spoke to them from the mercy seat of the Ark inside the Sanctuary, and revealed to them that there was sin in the camp. This is what God had promised Israel that He would do. He said, ***“I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims.”***

Read Exodus 25:10-22.

By now, I think you’re getting the picture: the Holy of Holies was the room of the Temple where God manifested His presence to Israel, and spoke with them. With this in mind, let’s return to the *measurements* of this room. What were its dimensions? In Solomon’s Temple, it was 20 cubits by 20 cubits by 20 cubits (or 30 x 30 x 30 feet)—a **perfect cube**! Likewise, in the blueprints of the Tabernacle (which God gave to Moses in **Exodus 26**), the Holy of Holies was a **perfect cube** of 10 x 10 x 10 cubits (or 15 x 15 x 15 feet). But that’s not all. In both the Tabernacle *and* the Temple, the walls of the Holy of Holies were overlaid with **pure gold**.

Now, remember: what is the shape of New Jerusalem? It is a **cube**! And of what material is the city made? **Pure gold**. It is a pure gold cube, just like the Holy of Holies in the Temple. Is this a coincidence? No, it is not. Remember: the patterns of the Tabernacle and Temple were given to Moses (and later, to David) by God Himself. The Tabernacle and Temple were *modelled* after the Temple in Heaven! In **Hebrews 8**, the Apostle Paul says that Christ is the ***“minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.”*** The “sanctuary” of which Paul is speaking is the Heavenly sanctuary; and, as Paul said, it is the ***“true”*** sanctuary. What this means is that the Heavenly Temple is the *original* Temple, and that the earthly Temple was *patterned after it*. We see this same truth in **Hebrews 9**, where Paul says, ***“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”*** In other words, Christ, after His death and resurrection, didn’t go into the *earthly Temple in Jerusalem*, to appear before a *symbol* of God’s throne; rather, He ascended up to *the true Temple in Heaven*, to appear before the *true* throne of God. Now that Christ is ascended on High, He is sitting on the *actual* throne of God, where He intercedes to the Father for us.

So, what does all this mean? It means that the entire city of New Jerusalem is the **true “Holy of Holies”**! The cubical shape of the Holy of Holies, with its gold-covered walls, was a faint earthly picture of the *real* Holy of Holies—the New Jerusalem, where God Himself sits on His throne. God the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ, ***“IS”*** the Temple of the New Jerusalem.

By the way, maybe you’re thinking, “Pastor, did you just say that the Father and the Son ***‘is’*** the Temple? Don’t you mean to say that the Father and the Son ***‘are’*** the Temple?”

Actually...no! I did mean to say “is”! You see, in the Greek, John used the singular verb

“*estin*,” which means “is”! Translators use the word “**are**” to make it grammatically correct in English; but the literal meaning of *estin* is “is”! Why did John use the singular verb “is,” when grammatically, it should be plural? Because John was making a theological point. He was showing that the Father and the Son, though distinct Persons, are of one essence, and one Godhead (along with the Holy Spirit). **First John 5:7** says, “***For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.***” Even the **cubical shape** of New Jerusalem illustrates that God is a Trinity! The width, length, and height of the city are distinct from each other; yet, they occupy the same space, and cannot be separated. Likewise, God, though three distinct persons, is three persons in one God!

Everything about the measurements of New Jerusalem bespeaks the awesomeness of God! The New Jerusalem is designed to be a house of worship, where angels and men worship Him! Yet, this raises the question: Is there a physical Temple *in* Heaven? Or is *God* the Temple? This brings us to our second point.

II. The prospective (future) Temple in Heaven

Read Revelation 11:15-19.

In this passage, we are reading about events that will be happening in Heaven shortly after the mid-point of the Tribulation period, just after the seventh trumpet judgment has sounded. However, what I particularly wish to point out is what John said about the Temple in **verse 19**. He said, “***And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testimony.***” Now, this is a curious statement! On the one hand, we know that the Ark of the Covenant on earth was a *symbol* of God’s throne in Heaven; yet, here we are told that *in Heaven* there is an *actual* Ark of the Covenant. We are also assured that there is a *Temple* in Heaven. In fact, throughout the book of **Revelation**, John repeatedly states that there was a Temple in Heaven. In **Revelation 1:4** and **Revelation 4:5**, John reports seeing a **Menorah** (a seven-branched candlestick), right in front of the throne of God. Next, John reports seeing an Ark of the Covenant in Heaven. (Even though the *actual* throne of God is in Heaven, there is also an Ark of the Covenant—a *symbol* of God’s throne—there in Heaven.) In **Revelation 6:9**, John reports seeing an “**altar**” of Sacrifice in Heaven; and in **Revelation 9:13**, he reports seeing an **altar of incense** situated before the throne of God. All these things were articles in the Old Testament Temple. Not only that, but John saw **24 elders** sitting on thrones in the throne room of Heaven. Just as there were 24 courses of priests, and 24 courses of singers, who served in Israel’s Temple, so there are 24 elders serving their courses in the Temple of God in Heaven. All these things speak of the presence of a Temple in Heaven.

So, here's the big question: if there be a Temple in Heaven, then why, in **Revelation 21**, does John say that there "*was no temple*" in Heaven, except for God Himself? The answer is simple: earlier in the book, John was seeing things the way they *presently* are in Heaven (and the way they will continue to be until the end of this present world). However, by the *end* of God's revelation to John (in **chapters 21 and 22**), John saw things the way they *will be*—*after* this sin-cursed universe has been destroyed by fire, and all things have been made new!

You see, *sin* is the issue here. Every Temple throughout history was a place where God met with man; but *man's sin* put a barrier between man and God. Now, the *very first* Temple in history was the **Garden of Eden**. In that gorgeous outdoor Temple, there was *no* barrier between God and man. Adam and Eve communed freely and sweetly with God every day, whenever God appeared to them and walked with them in the Garden. However, when Adam and Eve sinned, they were forced to leave that beautiful, open-air Temple; and God placed cherubim, with flaming swords, at the eastern entrance of Eden, to bar man from again entering the place of God's immediate presence. Similarly, in Israel's **Tabernacle**, and in their **Temple**, there was a thick veil on the eastern side of the Holy of Holies, with likenesses of cherubim sewn into the cloth. This veil was a barrier which *only* the high priest could go past; and even then, he could enter the Holy of Holies only one time per year, on the day of Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). On that day, the high priest went into the Holy of Holies by himself, to sprinkle the blood of bulls and goats on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant, so that the sins of the people of Israel could be symbolically covered for yet another year. All this was a picture of Christ, our true High Priest, offering His own blood as the atonement for our sins, so that we can now approach God with the assurance that our sins are forgiven.

Now, in this present dispensation of history, the Temple is not a physical building; it is a **spiritual building**. Every local, Bible-preaching assembly of saved and baptised believers *is* the Temple of God, wherever they meet together. In **1 Corinthians 3:16**, Paul told the church of Corinth, "***Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?***" For believers in Jesus Christ, there is no "veil" separating them from God, because Christ did away with that "veil" by His death on the cross for our sins. Believers can now go with confidence before the throne of God in prayer, because Christ has paid the debt for their sin. Yet, believers are still not in the physical presence of their Saviour in Heaven. That is why we who are saved yearn for the day when we will be "***present with the Lord***" in Heaven. Even during the 1,000-year Kingdom, when Christ is sitting on His throne in the re-built Temple in Jerusalem, there will still be the presence of sin on earth. Also, people will have to travel from all over the world to see and worship Christ on Mount Zion. Believers (at least, the Millennial saints, who won't have their glorified, resurrected bodies yet) will not have immediate access to Christ's immediate presence all the time.

However, after the New Heaven and New Earth are created, and there is no more presence of sin, and all God's saints of all ages are in their sinless, resurrected, glorified bodies, there will

be no more physical Temple in Heaven. Why? Because they will all be in the immediate presence of the Lord! **God Himself will be the Temple.** Also, there will be no more need of a physical structure to illustrate believers' redemption from sin and communion with God, because all God's people will be completely without sin, and in the very presence of their God and Saviour forever!

III. The purpose of the heavenly Temple

So far, we've seen that at present, there is a Temple *in* Heaven. The entire *city* could be even called a giant "Holy of Holies." However, in the future, there will be no physical Temple anymore, because God Himself will be the Temple (the place of worship). What does this tell us, then, about Heaven's *purpose*? It shows us that Heaven is all about redeemed members of Adam's race worshipping and serving God forever. In **Revelation 5**, John saw innumerable saints and angels singing and praising the Lamb of God; and this is what they sang.

Read Revelation 5:8-14.

God gave John an incredible glimpse of the worship in Heaven. However, this isn't the only place where such glimpses can be found. Apart from many other places in the book of **Revelation** where John saw heavenly worship scenes, other glimpses of Heaven's worship can be found in **Isaiah 6** and **Ezekiel 1**. Let's look at them.

Read Isaiah 6:1-4.

Read Ezekiel 1:4-28.

Read Revelation 4:1-11.

Now, let's put all these scenes together. First, we see that there are seraphim (mighty, shining, angels with six wings) constantly hovering around God's throne and saying, "***Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.***" There are four "***living creatures***" (a special kind of four-faced angel called the cherubim) upholding and transporting God's mighty chariot-throne, at His bidding; and, like the seraphim, these mighty angels continually cry, "***Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.***" In John's vision, he also saw 24 "***elders***" sitting on 24 seats around the throne of God; and at one point, they fell down prostrate on their faces, and cast their crowns before the Lord Jesus Christ, and

said, ***“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”*** These 24 elders are, perhaps, men who were pastors of local churches while they were on earth, and who are now serving in the heavenly Temple in rotation with other pastors, just as the priests in the Old Testament Temple served in rotation. But regardless of who these men are, they are clearly *representatives* of all God’s saints in this church age; and the act of worship that they perform (bowing before Christ, and throwing down their crowns at His feet) will be performed by *all God’s saints*, as they give Christ the credit for all that He has done for them, in them, and through them.

Folks, can you imagine what the combined sound of innumerable millions of voices of men and angels must be like? And don’t forget that there are also harpists playing in the heavenly chorus, as well. Heaven is filled with unbelievably glorious music at all times! However, music will not be the only form of worship in Heaven. For all eternity, God will have ***work for His servants*** to do; and our work will be an act of worship. In **Revelation 22:3**, we are told that ***“There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him.”*** We may not know much yet about what our duties in Heaven will be; but we do know that the gates of New Jerusalem will be open day and night, and that the ***“kings of the earth”*** will enter through the gates of the city, and will bring the ***“glory and honour”*** of the nations (literally, “peoples,” or “ethnicities”) into it. As we saw in last week’s message, there will be a new heaven and earth; and God will bring down the city of New Jerusalem to the new earth, and rest it upon it. Apparently, God’s people will have administrative positions of authority (kingship) in that new earth; and they will go in and out of the city of New Jerusalem. From the beginning of human history, God created man to work and toil with his hands, as a form of worship; and throughout eternity, God’s saints will continue to worship their Creator, by serving Him.

By the way, if work will be a form of worship *in Heaven*, what does this tell us about our work *down here on earth*? It tells us that our work on *earth* should be to the glory of God, too! God gave our father Adam huge jobs to do in the Garden of Eden (such as dressing the Garden, and naming all the animals); and He gave Adam these jobs *before* he even fell into sin. Work is *not* a curse that God placed on us because of our sin! *Sweat, thorns, thistles, physical pain, and weakening bodies* are part of the curse; but work itself is not. Work is one of the most important ways that we *worship* God! In everything you do, Christian, do it as though Christ Himself were visibly standing in your presence, and watching your work. Do your tasks as though you were doing them *for Christ Himself*—because, in fact, you *are*. (At least, you *should* be.) Would Christ be pleased with your diligence and thoroughness, and with the *motive* for which you do your work, and with the *attitude* with which you do your work? **First Corinthians 10:31** says, ***“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”*** **Colossians 3:22-24** says, ***“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God; And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;***

knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.” Christian, don’t let anyone tell you that being “too heavenly-minded” makes you of “no earthly good.” It’s actually just the opposite! Being heavenly-minded *motivates* you to do the best job you can possibly do, in every task. When you ask yourself, “Would I work *up in Heaven*, in Christ’s visible presence, the way I’m working down here on earth?”, it puts a whole new light on your work ethic. Christian, do your tasks in such a godly way, that people cannot help but acknowledge that you are a heavenly man (or a heavenly woman)!

IV. The believer’s passion for the heavenly Temple

Back in the 1960’s in America, there was a popular sitcom that ran for nine seasons. In one of the episodes, a police officer in a small town wins a prize from the county for the road-safety slogan that he had come up with. His slogan went like this: “Walk on the left side after dark, or you’ll wind up playing a harp.” (In other words, if you don’t walk carefully on the road after dark, you may lose your life; and if you do, you’ll end up in Heaven, playing a *harp*. And you don’t want *that*, do you?”) To this day, people are still chuckling over this little wise crack about Heaven. Now, do you see what this reveals? It reveals that to most people, the thought of Heaven is *undesirable*. They’ve seen cartoon pictures of bored-looking people wearing little white bathrobes, with little halos floating above their heads, while sitting on little white clouds, and holding little harps; and they figure, “Heaven? Seriously? That isn’t for me. Even if there *is* a Heaven, it doesn’t appeal to me. I’ll have as much fun as I can down here on earth, thank you!” This is the way the *world* thinks, because they can’t imagine finding enjoyment in a world where there are no sinful pleasures of any kind.

What about *you*? Do you want to go to Heaven only because you’re afraid of the alternative (of going to Hell)? Do you go through the motions of Christianity as a sort of “fire insurance” against Hell, even though you find the things of God to be boring? Is the thought of Heaven only a “last resort,” after you’ve had all the fun that you want to get out of this life? Perhaps you don’t find the thought of singing, praising, worshipping, and serving God for all eternity to be appealing at all. If so, I would ask: “Do you truly know the Lord? Are you really saved? Or is your profession of faith in Christ hollow and empty?” For those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, the thought of being in the presence of their Saviour, and of worshipping, praising, and serving the God who redeemed their souls, is a delight beyond description; but to those who have never known Him, this prospect seems like drudgery. Friend, if you don’t want to love, worship, and serve the Lord down here on earth, why would you want to love, worship, and serve Him for all eternity, in Heaven? You wouldn’t!

The bottom line is that you either regard *yourself* as the master of your life—or, you have submitted your life to Christ, and have owned *Him* as your Lord and Master, and now have a

new heart, and a *whole new* desire and purpose for living. There is no in between. If you have never repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ, now is the time to receive the new birth that Jesus died to purchase for you!

As the Apostle Paul wrote his letters to the churches, he knew that there was always the possibility that some of his converts were not truly saved: and that is why he said to the church of Corinth, “***Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves.***” In other words, “Make absolutely sure that you are saved—because eternity is *forever!*”

Conclusion: I remember a time when preachers talked about the Rapture—a *lot!* I remember when *Heaven and Hell* were preached about *a lot.* I remember when preachers emphasised that this world is *not our home*, and that Christians should hold to things of this earth very lightly. I remember when preachers preached hard against Rock music, casual dating, being unequally yoked with unbelievers, dancing, petting, sex outside of marriage, booze, and the world’s movies. I remember when young people, after a week of hard revival preaching, repented of their sin and believed on Jesus, and then brought their Rock records to church, smashed them, and threw them into a bonfire, to show their love for Jesus, and their renunciation of the world. Rarely do we hear that kind of preaching these days; nor do we often see genuine conversions, and true turning from sin. Somehow, many people convince themselves that they can follow Jesus while holding to the sins of this world. Folks, it doesn’t work that way! Jesus said, “***Repent ye, and believe the gospel!***”! Jesus is still calling sinners to *turn from their sin*, believe on Him, and then live a life of worship and service to Him. Will *you* answer His call? To those who are saved I would ask, “Have *you* slipped back to loving certain things of this world?” If so, cast down every hidden idol in your life, and *worship* the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.

¹ Dr. John R. Rice, *50 Years of Soul-Stirring Illustrations* (p. 68).