**The City of God**

By Albert F. Gilmore

From the [December 11, 1926 issue](https://sentinel.christianscience.com/issues/1926/12/29-15) of the *Christian Science Sentinel*

      The prophets and seers of ancient time visualized the heavenly state as a city, a holy city, the city of God. The Psalmist sang of it in these words: "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High." He further declares that "God is in the midst of her;" and again, in a psalm of David it is said, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God." Zion is described as the dwelling place of the Lord, of which "glorious things are spoken." Isaiah, also, makes reference to the glory of the church as "The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel."

John at Patmos envisioned this city of the great King, and described it in appealing language: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." And he sets forth in detail the beauty of this holy Jerusalem as far exceeding the wonders of any earthly city. John's language is so beautiful, so appealing, that one is led to inquire as to its significance. Why did John's concept of the heavenly state take the form of a city? This symbolic concept had its origin in the thought of city as affording shelter and security, as a place of safety. In the early history of mankind, men adopted community life primarily for security against their many common foes, and as the community grew, this was supplemented by many other advantages which were not available to the isolated dweller, living apart from his fellows. The city was protected by walls; water supply was established; markets were organized, and provision was made for the general well-being of the inhabitants in such terms as necessity demanded. Thus by degrees the city came to furnish to its inhabitants the greatest possibilities for safety from their enemies and for all material comforts and advantages. Accordingly, the heavenly state came to be visualized as a city, the city of Zion, where dwell those eternally blessed of the Father, and within the confines of which was gathered all that mankind esteems as desirable—the beautiful, true, and good. It was the dwelling place of all that the human heart longs for. It was the consummation of hope, the goal of human longing, the abode of the perfect and eternal.

In John's vision, this sacred city "coming down from God out of heaven" is described as "foursquare" and having "foundations." The meaning of this symbolism—and symbolism it plainly is—is set forth with great clarity in the Christian Science textbook, "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" ([p. 575](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=Taken+in+its+allegorical+sense%2C+the+description+of+the+city+as+foursquare+has+a+profound+meaning.+The+four+sides+of+our+city+are+the+Word%2C+Christ%2C+Christianity%2C+and+divine+Science.&book=tfccs.main.sh)), where Mrs. Eddy states: "Taken in its allegorical sense, the description of the city as foursquare has a profound meaning. The four sides of our city are the Word, Christ, Christianity, and divine Science." The city is a spiritual state without material accompaniments. It is the dwelling place of infinite Spirit, where all is spiritual and perfect, where prevails perpetual day.

"Northward," continues Mrs. Eddy, "its gates open to the North Star, the Word, the polar magnet of Revelation;" to the eastward, to the wise men who, beholding the star, followed its radiant light to the birthplace of the infant Jesus. Its southward prospect opens to the genial climate of the tropics, where under the Southern Cross, which looks down in the majesty of its celestial beauty, life is happy and free. This cross Mrs. Eddy saw as typifying the cross of Calvary, about which mankind assembles in holy expectancy of the new day, the day of Christ's appearing to signalize the release of mankind from all material restraints, all earthly woe. To the westward, our Leader saw the outlook upon the complete realization of the presence of divine Love, where certainty and harmony eternally prevail.

The purely spiritual nature of John's vision is assured by his words; no material structure stands in the holy city, for it is the city of Spirit. What better proof could mortals have that the universe of God, good, must be entirely spiritual, free from all materiality, than the assurance that no material temple is included within its sacred precincts. Perfectly do these words corroborate Jesus' sayings. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Christian Scientists find in these inspired words the incentive to lift thought above the worship of material symbols in order to gain their true sense. As seekers for citizenship in the holy city, they strive to abandon all material sense testimony, the more completely to share with John the heavenly vision. To them the holy city is indeed the abiding place of the blessed, of those who have cast off the yoke of material bondage. One may begin now to work for citizenship in the city of God, and the privilege is open to all, for already the real man is a dweller within its sacred precincts. It is the abiding place of all God's children, and all are permanent dwellers there.

"City of God, how broad and far
Outspread Thy walls sublime!
The true Thy chartered freemen are,
Of every age and clime."

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