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Sermon Notes

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John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Final Stage: Beulah Land; Crossing the River; the Celestial City

I. Review

- The whole story is cast as a dream which Bunyan had while in prison
- Christian reads the Bible and understands that he is living in the City of Destruction; he is crushed by a terrible heavy burden on his back
- He meets a man name Evangelist who talked with him and pointed him toward the Wicket Gate and he begins his pilgrimage
- After falling into the Slough of Despond, he is rescued and continues
- He listens to Mr. Legality takes a bad sidetrack to the tow of Morality to get his burden off his back
- But the mountain (Mt. Sinai, representing God's Law) leans over him and threatens to destroy him
- Evangelist found him and severely rebuked him for leaving the way; he got him back onto the true path
- Christian comes to the Wicket Gate, where he knocks, and is welcomed in by the gatekeeper, Goodwill
- Christian continues on his journey and comes to Interpreter's House
- Interpreter shows him seven helpful things in his house that are intended to put Christian in a proper frame of mind for his pilgrimage
 - The Spiritual Guide
 - The Dusty Room
 - Passion and Patience
 - The Fire Burning Against the Wall
 - The Palace and the Warrior

- The Man in the Iron Cage
- The Dream of Judgment Day
- Christian comes at last to the cross and his burden rolls away into the empty tomb and he saw it no more
- The Shining Ones give him words of assurance, a new robe, and a scroll, telling him to look on it as he travels and give it in at the Celestial City (We find out later the scroll represents assurance of salvation)
- Christian interacts with three slumbering men—Simple, Sloth, and Presumption, and tries to rouse them to pilgrimage, but they blow him off
- Christian sees two men come tumbling in over the wall—Formalist and Hypocrisy—and rebukes them for not coming in through the Gate as he did; they represent false religions (like medieval Catholicism) which give assurance based on religiosity and works rather than faith in Christ
- Christian climbs with great effort up Hill Difficulty; halfway up, he stops at the Shady Arbor which the Lord of the Hill has put there for the refreshment of pilgrims
- Christian falls asleep in the Shady Arbor, wakes with the day far spent, and hurries on; but he accidentally left his scroll there
- Christian sees two men (Mistrust and Timorous) fleeing from some lions and after talking with them, he resolves to go on; but searching for his scroll to read and find comfort, he discovers it's gone
- He goes all the way back to the Shady Arbor, reproaching himself for his sinful sleep
- He comes back at last, sees the lions, and is told by a porter named Watchful that they are chained, and he'll be fine if he stays on the path
- He comes to the House Beautiful and is entertained there by four beautiful young women named Discretion, Charity, Prudence, and Piety, with whom he has searching conversations
- Christian enjoys a very refreshing time at that house; sees the sunrise and is strengthened for his journey
- The women equip him with armor for his upcoming battles
- Christian fights a fierce battle with Apollyon, a powerful demon sent by Satan to tempt him

- Christian is hard-pressed in the battle and suffers some wounds
- BUT in the end, Christian drives off Apollyon with the “sword of the Spirit,” the Word of God
- The Christian makes his way through the “Valley of the Shadow of Death”
- Here, Christian is beset by the terrors of the night, all kinds of distressing sounds leading to overwhelming fears and anxieties
- He must walk a narrow path between a steep cliff on one side and a noxious swamp on the other
- He takes himself to prayer and continues to make slow progress through the terrifying Valley
- When the sun finally comes up, he is able to travel much more easily through the Valley, even though the way became much more treacherous
- Along the way, he hears someone else traveling through it, reciting Psalm 23 to himself
- He catches up to him and finds that his name is Faithful, and they walk and talk together, and enjoy sweet fellowship
- Faithful describes his battle with the “Old Man” (Adam) and with Moses, who beats him up because of his sins; Christ bids Moses to stop
- Christian and Faithful talk to a man named Talkative, who talks a good game, but who has no real godliness to line up with his confession
- Faithful describes the elements of a true work of grace in a person’s life; Faithful exposes Talkative’s sinful lifestyle; Talkative refuses to walk with them any more
- Evangelist comes and warns Christian and Faithful about the trial they are about to undergo in Vanity Fair; prophesies that one of them will be martyred
- Christian and Faithful arrive at Vanity Fair, Bunyan’s allegory of “The World” with all its carnal delights and temptations
- Christian and Faithful try to make their way quietly through Vanity Fair, but the townspeople begin to oppose, mock, and eventually to attack them
- Christian and Faithful are arrested, imprisoned, and beaten
- Faithful goes on trial and makes a courageous testimony of his faith in Christ and their sinful ways
- Faithful is convicted by a jury of wicked men
- Faithful is brutally martyred and taken immediately by a chariot up to the Celestial City

- Christian escapes with his life; Hopeful, converted in part by their witness, joins him on pilgrimage
- Hopeful describes his battle with Adam (the “Old Man”) and Moses
- They meet By-ends who is a “Christian” when it benefits him, especially financially
- By-ends meets up with others like him (Mr. Hold-the-world; Mr. Money-love; Mr. Save-all) who discuss why it is fine for people to follow religion if and when it is profitable in this world
- Christian and Hopeful refute their false arguments
- The pilgrims are refreshed briefly by the River of the Water of Life
- Christian leads Hopeful off the true road in favor of “By-path Meadow” which seems to run right alongside the road, but which eventually veers off and leads them far astray
- A terrible storm comes along, and they cannot find their way back
- They sleep for the night, but are wakened by a giant named Despair who arrests them and throws them in the dungeon of his home called “Doubting Castle”
- Despair beats them mercilessly over several encounters; prodded by his wicked wife, Diffidence, Despair tries to persuade them to kill themselves
- Hopeful manages to speak words of hope to Christian and keeps him from suicide
- Eventually Christian remembers that he has a key in his breast pocket called “Promise,” and he pulls it out. It ends up unlocking every door that held them in and they make their escape
- Once back safely upon the true road, they put up a warning sign not to jump the fence into By-path Meadow, since it leads to Doubting Castle
- Christian and Hopeful spend time in the Delectable Mountains with the Shepherds
- The Shepherds show them a glimpse of the Celestial City by a telescope
- They also show them a doorway to hell where apostates go
- They warn them about the Flatterer and give them advice on how to stay on the road
- Christian and Hopeful meet Ignorance, a man who is traveling to the Celestial City based on his own religion, a religion popular in his own country but which does not involve coming in at the Gate (i.e. faith in Jesus Christ)

- They also see a man named Turn-away who ends up being an apostate, seized by seven devils and thrown into the doorway to hell they saw earlier
- They discuss the case of Little-faith, a man who was robbed on the highway of many of his earthly jewels, but whose true treasure is in heaven; however, Little-faith spent the rest of his life wailing and lamenting over the crime done to him, rather than rejoicing over his heavenly inheritance
- Christian and Hopeful, not heeding the instructions of the Shepherds, are led off the path by a deceiver who is dressed in a white robe; his name is Flatterer
- They end up in a net, snared by Flatterer's words
- A Shining One comes and asks them very pointed questions, and exposes their sin; he then scourges them to teach them to be more careful in their walk
- They meet Atheist, who laughs them to scorn for their pilgrimage to the Celestial City; he asserts that there is no such place, and leaves them while laughing at them
- After Atheist leaves, Christian asks Hopeful to tell him how he came to seek after the good of his soul by going on pilgrimage to the Celestial City
- Hopeful gives his testimony, by which Bunyan describes clearly the steps by which God brings someone to conviction and to faith
- What comes across most clearly is what a complex and careful process it is, culminating in a clear revelation of Christ to the soul
- After this, they talk again with Ignorance, who reveals a faulty understanding of how God's grace in Christ saves sinners... he says it is by making his works worthy of his acceptance by God the Judge
- Ignorance mocks their reliance on a spiritual revelation of Christ to the soul
- They part company with Ignorance
- We will see Ignorance again at the very end of this story.

II. Temporary, and the Steps Toward Apostasy

A. Christian Mentions Temporary

CHR. Well then, did you not know, about ten years ago, one Temporary in your parts, who was a forward man in religion then?

HOPE. Know him! yes, he dwelt in Graceless, a town about two miles off of Honesty, and he dwelt next door to one Turnback.

CHR. Right, he dwelt under the same roof with him. Well, that man was much awakened once; I believe that then he had some sight of his sins, and of the wages that were due thereto.

HOPE. I am of your mind, for, my house not being above three miles from him, he would oftentimes come to me, and that with many tears. Truly I pitied the man, and was not altogether without hope of him; but one may see, it is not every one that cries, Lord, Lord.

CHR. He told me once that he was resolved to go on pilgrimage, as we do now; but all of a sudden he grew acquainted with one Save-self, and then he became a stranger to me.

B. Reasons for Apostasy

HOPE. Now, since we are talking about him, let us a little inquire into the reason of the sudden backsliding of him and such others.

CHR. It may be very profitable, but do you begin.

HOPE. Well, then, there are in my judgment four reasons for it:--

1. Though the consciences of such men are awakened, yet their minds are not changed; therefore, when the power of guilt weareth away, that which provoked them to be religious ceaseth, wherefore they naturally turn to their own course again, even as we see the dog that is sick of what he has eaten, so long as his sickness prevails he vomits and casts up all; not that he doth this of a free mind (if we may say a dog has a mind), but because it troubleth his stomach; but now, when his sickness is over, and so his stomach eased, his desire being not at all alienate from his vomit, he turns him about and licks up all, and so it is true which is written, "The dog is turned to his own vomit again." [2 Pet. 2:22] Thus I say, being hot for heaven, by virtue only of the sense and fear of the torments of hell, as their sense of hell and the fears of damnation chills and cools, so their desires for heaven and salvation cool also. So then it comes to pass, that when their guilt and fear is gone, their desires for heaven and happiness die, and they return to their course again.

2. Another reason is, they have slavish fears that do overmaster them; I speak now of the fears that they have of men, for "the fear of man bringeth a snare". [Prov. 29:25] So then, though they seem to be hot for heaven, so long as the flames of hell are about their ears, yet when that terror is a little over, they betake themselves to second thoughts; namely, that it is good to be wise, and not to run (for they know not what) the hazard of losing all, or, at least, of bringing themselves into unavoidable and unnecessary troubles, and so they fall in with the world again.
3. The shame that attends religion lies also as a block in their way; they are proud and haughty; and religion in their eye is low and contemptible, therefore, when they have lost their sense of hell and wrath to come, they return again to their former course.
4. Guilt, and to meditate terror, are grievous to them. They like not to see their misery before they come into it; though perhaps the sight of it first, if they loved that sight, might make them fly whither the righteous fly and are safe. But because they do, as I hinted before, even shun the thoughts of guilt and terror, therefore, when once they are rid of their awakenings about the terrors and wrath of God, they harden their hearts gladly, and choose such ways as will harden them more and more.

CHR. You are pretty near the business, for the bottom of all is for want of a change in their mind and will. And therefore they are but like the felon that standeth before the judge, he quakes and trembles, and seems to repent most heartily, but the bottom of all is the fear of the halter; not that he hath any detestation of the offence, as is evident, because, let but this man have his liberty, and he will be a thief, and so a rogue still, whereas, if his mind was changed, he would be otherwise.

DQ) What insights does this section give you into the nature of true salvation vs. a counterfeit?

DQ) Why is it beneficial to study these insights?

C. The Practical Steps Toward Apostasy

HOPE. Now I have showed you the reasons of their going back, do you show me the manner thereof.

CHR. So I will willingly.

1. They draw off their thoughts, all that they may, from the remembrance of God, death, and judgment to come.

2. Then they cast off by degrees private duties, as closet prayer, curbing their lusts, watching, sorrow for sin, and the like.
3. Then they shun the company of lively and warm Christians.
4. After that they grow cold to public duty, as hearing, reading, godly conference, and the like.
5. Then they begin to pick holes, as we say, in the coats of some of the godly; and that devilishly, that they may have a seeming colour to throw religion (for the sake of some infirmity they have espied in them) behind their backs.
6. Then they begin to adhere to, and associate themselves with, carnal, loose, and wanton men.
7. Then they give way to carnal and wanton discourses in secret; and glad are they if they can see such things in any that are counted honest, that they may the more boldly do it through their example.
8. After this they begin to play with little sins openly.
9. And then, being hardened, they show themselves as they are. Thus, being launched again into the gulf of misery, unless a miracle of grace prevent it, they everlastingly perish in their own deceivings.

Hebrews 2:1 We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.

Hebrews 3:12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

Hebrews 6:4-6 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, ⁶ if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

DQ) Why is it helpful to understand the gradual steps that people go through in drifting away from Christ, leading to turning away, leading to falling away? Why would you say that fear of apostasy is helpful in the Christian life?

III. Beulah, and the Foretaste of Heaven

A. Beulah Described

Now I saw in my dream, that by this time the Pilgrims were got over the Enchanted Ground, and entering into the country of Beulah, whose air was very sweet and pleasant, the way lying directly through it, they solaced themselves there for a season. Yea, here they heard continually the singing of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear on the earth, and heard the voice of the turtle in the land. [Isa. 62:4, Song of Solomon 2:10-12] In this country the sun shineth night and day; wherefore this was beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and also out of the reach of Giant Despair, neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting Castle. Here they were within sight of the city they were going to, also here met them some of the inhabitants thereof; for in this land the Shining Ones commonly walked, because it was upon the borders of heaven. In this land also, the contract between the bride and the bridegroom was renewed; yea, here, "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so did their God rejoice over them." [Isa. 62:5] Here they had no want of corn and wine; for in this place they met with abundance of what they had sought for in all their pilgrimage. [Isa. 62:8] Here they heard voices from out of the city, loud voices, saying, "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh! Behold, his reward is with him!" Here all the inhabitants of the country called them, 'The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord, Sought out"', etc. [Isa. 62:11,12]

Now as they walked in this land, they had more rejoicing than in parts more remote from the kingdom to which they were bound; and drawing near to the city, they had yet a more perfect view thereof. It was builded of pearls and precious stones, also the street thereof was paved with gold; so that by reason of the natural glory of the city, and the reflection of the sunbeams upon it, Christian with desire fell sick; Hopeful also had a fit or two of the same disease. Wherefore, here they lay by it a while, crying out, because of their pangs, If ye find my beloved, tell him that I am sick of love.

But, being a little strengthened, and better able to bear their sickness, they walked on their way, and came yet nearer and nearer, where were orchards, vineyards, and gardens, and their gates opened into the highway. Now, as they came up to these places, behold the gardener stood in the way, to whom the Pilgrims said, Whose goodly vineyards and gardens are these? He answered, They are the King's, and are planted here for his own delight, and also for the solace of pilgrims. So the gardener had them into the vineyards, and bid them refresh themselves with the dainties. [Deut. 23:24] He also showed them there the King's walks, and the harbours where he delighted to be; and here they tarried and slept.

Now I beheld in my dream that they talked more in their sleep at this time than ever they did in all their journey; and being in a muse thereabout, the gardener said even to me, Wherefore musest thou at the matter? It is the nature of the fruit of the grapes of these vineyards to go down so sweetly as to cause the lips of them that are asleep to speak.

DQ) In what ways does God give foretastes of heavenly joy? Why would he do this? Does he do this for everyone?

DQ) What is the benefit of seeking such a foretaste of heavenly joy? Are there any dangers to seeking it? How should we seek it?

B. Unable to See the Celestial City Directly

So I saw that when they awoke, they addressed themselves to go up to the city; but, as I said, the reflection of the sun upon the city (for the city was pure gold) was so extremely glorious that they could not, as yet, with open face behold it, but through an instrument made for that purpose.

DQ) What is the “instrument” by which we can see the glories of heaven while still on earth?

KJV 1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

IV. The River of Death

A. Christian and Hopeful Told Ahead of Time about the River

So I saw, that as I went on, there met them two men, in raiment that shone like gold; also their faces shone as the light. [Rev. 21:18, 2 Cor. 3:18]

These men asked the Pilgrims whence they came; and they told them. They also asked them where they had lodged, what difficulties and dangers, what comforts and pleasures they had met in the way; and they told them. Then said the men that met them, You have but two difficulties more to meet with, and then you are in the city.

Christian then, and his companion, asked the men to go along with them; so they told them they would. But, said they, you must obtain it by your own faith. So I saw in my dream that they went on together, until they came in sight of the gate.

Now, I further saw, that betwixt them and the gate was a river, but there was no bridge to go over: the river was very deep. At the sight, therefore, of this river, the Pilgrims were much stunned; but the men that went in with them said, You must go through, or you cannot come at the gate.

DQ) Why is it beneficial to think ahead of time about the reality and inevitability of our own death? What are some healthy ways of doing this, and what are unhealthy?

Psalm 90:12 Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Hebrews 9:27 ... man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment

Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

2 Timothy 4:6 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure.

2 Peter 1:13-14 I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, ¹⁴ because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

B. The Inevitability of Death; the Need for Faith

The Pilgrims then began to inquire if there was no other way to the gate; to which they answered, Yes; but there hath not any, save two, to wit, Enoch and Elijah, been permitted to tread that path since the foundation of the world, nor shall, until the last trumpet shall sound. [1 Cor. 15:51,52] The Pilgrims then, especially Christian, began to despond in their minds, and looked this way and that, but no way could be found by them by which they might escape the river. Then they asked the men if the waters were all of a depth. They said: No; yet they could not help them in that case; for, said they, you shall find it deeper or shallower as you believe in the King of the place.

C. Christian's Severe Trial in Death... Compared with Hopeful's Relative Ease

They then addressed themselves to the water and, entering, Christian began to sink, and crying out to his good friend Hopeful, he said, I sink in deep waters; the billows go over my head, all his waves go over me! Selah.

Then said the other, Be of good cheer, my brother, I feel the bottom, and it is good. Then said Christian, Ah! my friend, the sorrows of death hath compassed me about; I shall not see the land that flows with

milk and honey; and with that a great darkness and horror fell upon Christian, so that he could not see before him. Also here he in great measure lost his senses, so that he could neither remember nor orderly talk of any of those sweet refreshments that he had met with in the way of his pilgrimage. But all the words that he spake still tended to discover that he had horror of mind, and heart fears that he should die in that river, and never obtain entrance in at the gate. Here also, as they that stood by perceived, he was much in the troublesome thoughts of the sins that he had committed, both since and before he began to be a pilgrim. It was also observed that he was troubled with apparitions of hobgoblins and evil spirits, for ever and anon he would intimate so much by words. Hopeful, therefore, here had much ado to keep his brother's head above water; yea, sometimes he would be quite gone down, and then, ere a while, he would rise up again half dead. Hopeful also would endeavour to comfort him, saying, Brother, I see the gate, and men standing by to receive us: but Christian would answer, It is you, it is you they wait for; you have been Hopeful ever since I knew you. And so have you, said he to Christian. Ah! brother! said he, surely if I was right he would now arise to help me; but for my sins he hath brought me into the snare, and hath left me. Then said Hopeful, My brother, you have quite forgot the text, where it is said of the wicked, "There are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. [Ps. 73:4,5] These troubles and distresses that you go through in these waters are no sign that God hath forsaken you; but are sent to try you, whether you will call to mind that which heretofore you have received of his goodness, and live upon him in your distresses.

DQ) Why do you think some Christians go through death more easily than others?

DQ) What were some aspects of the trial for Christian?

DQ) How did Hopeful seek to comfort him?

DQ) What does it mean for a Christian to “die well”? Why is it beneficial to die well? What fruit comes from dying well?

DQ) What can we learn now to prepare us to go through death with more evident trust in the Lord, so that God is more glorified?

D. Christian and Hopeful Successfully Cross

Then I saw in my dream, that Christian was as in a muse a while. To whom also Hopeful added this word, Be of good cheer, Jesus

Christ maketh thee whole; and with that Christian brake out with a loud voice, Oh, I see him again! and he tells me, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." [Isa. 43:2] Then they both took courage, and the enemy was after that as still as a stone, until they were gone over. Christian therefore presently found ground to stand upon, and so it followed that the rest of the river was but shallow. Thus they got over.

V. The Celestial City

A. Christian and Hopeful Met by Angels Who Escort Them

Now, upon the bank of the river, on the other side, they saw the two shining men again, who there waited for them; wherefore, being come out of the river, they saluted them, saying, We are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those that shall be heirs of salvation. Thus they went along towards the gate.

Now you must note that the city stood upon a mighty hill, but the Pilgrims went up that hill with ease, because they had these two men to lead them up by the arms; also, they had left their mortal garments behind them in the river, for though they went in with them, they came out without them. They, therefore, went up here with much agility and speed, though the foundation upon which the city was framed was higher than the clouds. They therefore went up through the regions of the air, sweetly talking as they went, being comforted, because they safely got over the river, and had such glorious companions to attend them.

2 Corinthians 5:8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

Hebrews 12:22-23 you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect

B. Heavenly Life Described by the Angels as they Ascend To It

*Now, now, look how the holy pilgrims ride,
Clouds are their chariots, angels are their guide:
Who would not here for him all hazards run,
That thus provides for his when this world's done?*

The talk they had with the Shining Ones was about the glory of the place; who told them that the beauty and glory of it was inexpressible. There, said they, is the Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. [Heb. 12:22-24] You are going now, said they, to the paradise of God, wherein you shall see the tree of life, and eat of the never-fading fruits thereof; and when you come there, you shall have white robes given you, and your walk and talk shall be every day with the King, even all the days of eternity. [Rev. 2:7, 3:4, 21:4,5] There you shall not see again such things as you saw when you were in the lower region upon the earth, to wit, sorrow, sickness, affliction, and death, for the former things are passed away. You are now going to Abraham, to Isaac, and Jacob, and to the prophets--men that God hath taken away from the evil to come, and that are now resting upon their beds, each one walking in his righteousness. [Isa. 57:1,2, 65:17] The men then asked, What must we do in the holy place? To whom it was answered, You must there receive the comforts of all your toil, and have joy for all your sorrow; you must reap what you have sown, even the fruit of all your prayers, and tears, and sufferings for the King by the way. [Gal. 6:7] In that place you must wear crowns of gold, and enjoy the perpetual sight and vision of the Holy One, for there you shall see him as he is. [1 John 3:2] There also you shall serve him continually with praise, with shouting, and thanksgiving, whom you desired to serve in the world, though with much difficulty, because of the infirmity of your flesh. There your eyes shall be delighted with seeing, and your ears with hearing the pleasant voice of the Mighty One. There you shall enjoy your friends again that are gone thither before you; and there you shall with joy receive, even every one that follows into the holy place after you. There also shall you be clothed with glory and majesty, and put into an equipage fit to ride out with the King of Glory. When he shall come with sound of trumpet in the clouds, as upon the wings of the wind, you shall come with him; and when he shall sit upon the throne of judgment; you shall sit by him; yea, and when he shall pass sentence upon all the workers of iniquity, let them be angels or men, you also shall have a voice in that judgment, because they were his and your enemies. [1 Thes. 4:13-16, Jude 1:14, Dan. 7:9,10, 1 Cor. 6:2,3] Also, when he shall again return to the city, you shall go too, with sound of trumpet, and be ever with him.

DQ) As you read the description of the heavenly life, what most appeals to you?

DQ) Why is it so beneficial to think often and in detail about our heavenly life? How does it help us serve the Lord better here on earth?

DQ) Why do you think so many Christians regularly neglect this meditation?

C. Fellowship with the Angels as They Ascend

Now while they were thus drawing towards the gate, behold a company of the heavenly host came out to meet them; to whom it was said, by the other two Shining Ones, These are the men that have loved our Lord when they were in the world, and that have left all for his holy name; and he hath sent us to fetch them, and we have brought them thus far on their desired journey, that they may go in and look their Redeemer in the face with joy. Then the heavenly host gave a great shout, saying, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." [Rev. 19:9] There came out also at this time to meet them, several of the King's trumpeters, clothed in white and shining raiment, who, with melodious noises, and loud, made even the heavens to echo with their sound. These trumpeters saluted Christian and his fellow with ten thousand welcomes from the world; and this they did with shouting, and sound of trumpet.

This done, they compassed them round on every side; some went before, some behind, and some on the right hand, some on the left, (as it were to guard them through the upper regions), continually sounding as they went, with melodious noise, in notes on high: so that the very sight was, to them that could behold it, as if heaven itself was come down to meet them. Thus, therefore, they walked on together; and as they walked, ever and anon these trumpeters, even with joyful sound, would, by mixing their music with looks and gestures, still signify to Christian and his brother, how welcome they were into their company, and with what gladness they came to meet them; and now were these two men, as it were, in heaven, before they came at it, being swallowed up with the sight of angels, and with hearing of their melodious notes. Here also they had the city itself in view, and they thought they heard all the bells therein to ring, to welcome them thereto. But above all, the warm and joyful thoughts that they had about their own dwelling there, with such company, and that for ever and ever. Oh, by what tongue or pen can their glorious joy be expressed! And thus they came up to the gate.

DQ) 2 Peter 1:11 speaks of receiving a “rich welcome” into the eternal kingdom of Christ. What does that concept mean to you? How does Bunyan describe such a rich welcome?

DQ) What does this section teach you about Bunyan’s conception of heaven? How is the relational side of heaven so prominent here... joy in relationship with angels and other redeemed people?

D. Entrance at the Gate: Proof of a Righteous Life

Now, when they were come up to the gate, there was written over it in letters of gold, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." [Rev. 22:14]

Then I saw in my dream that the Shining Men bid them call at the gate; the which, when they did, some looked from above over the gate, to wit, Enoch, Moses, and Elijah, &c., to whom it was said, These pilgrims are come from the City of Destruction, for the love that they bear to the King of this place; and then the Pilgrims gave in unto them each man his certificate, which they had received in the beginning; those, therefore, were carried in to the King, who, when he had read them, said, Where are the men? To whom it was answered, They are standing without the gate. The King then commanded to open the gate, "That the righteous nation," said he, "which keepeth the truth, may enter in." [Isa. 26:2]

DQ) What is Bunyan emphasizing here? Why is it vital to understand the kind of practical holiness that always attends genuine faith, without which we will not see the Lord?

Hebrews 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

DQ) How does Hebrews 12:14 show a kind of holiness we must work for that is essential if we want to go to heaven?

E. Entrance into the City

Now I saw in my dream that these two men went in at the gate: and lo, as they entered, they were transfigured, and they had raiment put on that shone like gold. There was also that met them with harps and crowns, and gave them to them--the harps to praise withal, and the crowns in token of honour. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, "ENTER YE INTO THE JOY OF YOUR LORD." I also heard

the men themselves, that they sang with a loud voice, saying, "BLESSING AND HONOUR, AND GLORY, AND POWER, BE UNTO HIM THAT SITTETH UPON THE THRONE, AND UNTO THE LAMB, FOR EVER AND EVER." [Rev. 5:13]

Now, just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and, behold, the City shone like the sun; the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men, with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal.

There were also of them that had wings, and they answered one another without intermission, saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord." [Rev. 4:8] And after that they shut up the gates; which, when I had seen, I wished myself among them.

F. Ignorance Turned Away at the Gate

Now while I was gazing upon all these things, I turned my head to look back, and saw Ignorance come up to the river side; but he soon got over, and that without half that difficulty which the other two men met with. For it happened that there was then in that place, one Vain-hope, a ferryman, that with his boat helped him over; so he, as the other I saw, did ascend the hill, to come up to the gate, only he came alone; neither did any man meet him with the least encouragement. When he was come up to the gate, he looked up to the writing that was above, and then began to knock, supposing that entrance should have been quickly administered to him; but he was asked by the men that looked over the top of the gate, Whence came you, and what would you have? He answered, I have eat and drank in the presence of the King, and he has taught in our streets. Then they asked him for his certificate, that they might go in and show it to the King; so he fumbled in his bosom for one, and found none. Then said they, Have you none? But the man answered never a word. So they told the King, but he would not come down to see him, but commanded the two Shining Ones that conducted Christian and Hopeful to the City, to go out and take Ignorance, and bind him hand and foot, and have him away. Then they took him up, and carried him through the air to the door that I saw in the side of the hill, and put him in there. Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction. So I awoke, and behold it was a dream.

VI. Conclusion

Now, Reader, I have told my dream to thee;
 See if thou canst interpret it to me,
 Or to thyself, or neighbour; but take heed
 Of misinterpreting; for that, instead
 Of doing good, will but thyself abuse:
 By misinterpreting, evil ensues.

Take heed, also, that thou be not extreme,
 In playing with the outside of my dream:
 Nor let my figure or similitude
 Put thee into a laughter or a feud.
 Leave this for boys and fools; but as for thee,
 Do thou the substance of my matter see.

Put by the curtains, look within my veil,
 Turn up my metaphors, and do not fail,
 There, if thou seekest them, such things to find,
 As will be helpful to an honest mind.
 What of my dross thou findest there, be bold
 To throw away, but yet preserve the gold;
 What if my gold be wrapped up in ore?--
 None throws away the apple for the core.
 But if thou shalt cast all away as vain,
 I know not but 'twill make me dream again.