As I walked through the wilderness [1] of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where
was a den;[2] and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and as I slept, I dreamed a
place, with his face from his own house, a book [5] in his hand, and a great burden [6] upon
his back.” (Isa. 64:6; Luke 14:33; Psa. 38:4; Hab. 2:2; Acts 16:31).

I looked, and saw him open the book, and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled; and
not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying, “What shall I do?”[7] (Acts
2:37).[4]

In this plight, therefore, he went home, and refrained himself as long as he could, that his wife
and children should not perceive his distress; but he could not be silent long, because that his trouble
increased.

Wherefore at length he brake his mind to his wife
and children; and thus he began to talk to them: “O
my dear wife,” said he, “and you, the children of
my bowels, I, your dear friend, am in myself
undone, by reason of a burden that lieth hard upon
me; moreover, I am for certain informed that thiour
city will be burned with fire from Heaven [8]; in
which fearful overthrow, both myself, with thee, my
wife, and you, my sweet babes, shall miserably
come to ruin, except (the which yet I see not) some
way of escape can be found, whereby we may be
delivered.” At this, his relations were sore amazed;
not for that they believed that what he had said to
them was true, but because they thought that some
frenzy distemper had got into his head; therefore, it
drawing towards night, and they hoping that sleep
might settle his brains, with all haste they got him to
bed. But the night was as troublesome to him as the
day; wherefore, instead of sleeping, he spent it in
sighs and tears. So when the morning was come,
they would know how he did; he told them, worse and worse; he also set to talking to them again, but they began to be hardened. They also thought to drive away his distemper by harsh and surly carriages to him. Sometimes they would deride, sometimes they would chide, and sometimes they would quite neglect him.

Wherefore he began to retire himself to his chamber to pray for, and pity them, and also to condole his own misery. He would also walk solitarily in the fields, sometimes reading, and sometimes praying; and thus for some days he spent his time.

Now I saw upon a time, when he was walking in the fields, that he was, as he was wont, reading in his book, and greatly distressed in his mind; and as he read, he burst out, as he had done before, crying, “What shall I do to be saved?”[9] (Acts 16:30,31).

I saw also that he looked this way and that way, as if he would run; yet he stood still, because, as I perceived, he could not tell which way to go. I looked then, and saw a man named Evangelist [10] coming to him, who asked, “Wherefore dost thou cry?”

He answered, Sir, I perceive, by the book in my hand, that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to judgment, (Heb. 9:27); and I find that I am not willing (Job 16:21, 22) to do the first, nor able (Eze. 22:14) to do the second.

Then said Evangelist, Why not willing to die, since this life is attended with so many evils? The man answered, Because I fear that this burden that is upon my back will sink me lower than the grave; and I shall fall into Tophet (Isa. 30:33). And, Sir, if I be not fit to go to prison, I am not fit, I am sure, to go to judgment, and from thence to execution; and the thoughts of these things make me cry.

[9] What must I do to be saved?
Acts 16:30-31 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

[10] Evangelist – one who relays information about the way of escape (Christ) from the destruction/judgment of God.
Then said Evangelist, If this be thy condition, why standest thou still? He answered, Because I know not whither to go. Then he gave him a parchment roll, and there was written within, “Fly from the wrath to come” [11] (Matt. 3:7).

The man therefore, read it, and looking upon Evangelist very carefully, said, Whither must I fly? Then said Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, Do you see yonder wicket gate [12]? (Matt. 7:13). The man said, No. Then said the other, Do you see yonder shining light [13]? (Psa. 119:105; 2 Peter 1:19). He said, I think I do. Then said Evangelist, Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly thereto, so shalt thou see the gate; at which, when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.[14] So I saw in my dream that the man began to run. Now, he had not ran far from his own door, but his wife and children perceiving it, began to cry after him to return (Luke 14:26); but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on, crying, Life! life! Eternal life! So he looked not behind him (Gen. 19:17), but fled towards the middle of the plain.

The neighbours also came out to see him run, and as he ran, some mocked, others threatened, and some cried after him to return (Luke 14:26); but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on, crying. Life! life! Eternal life! So he looked not behind him (Gen. 19:17), but fled towards the middle of the plain.

The name of the one was Obstinate [15], and the name of the other Pliable.[16] Now by this time, the man was got a good distance from them; but, however, they were resolved to pursue him; which they did, and in a little time they overtook him. Then said the man, Neighbours, wherefore are ye come? They said, To persuade you to go back with us.

But he said, That can by no means be. You dwell, said he, in the City of Destruction [17], the place also where I was born; I see it to be so; and dying there, sooner or later, you will sink lower than the grave, into a place that burns with fire and


Mt 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Mt 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Mt 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

[12] wicket means small (small gate) or narrow

Mt 7:14 Because strait [is] the gate, and narrow [is] the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

[13] Light & Gate or Metaphors for Christ

John 12:46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

[14] When we seek Christ we are told what we must do.

[15] Obstinate - Stubbornly adhering to an attitude, opinion, or course of action

[16] Pliable – easily bent or shaped, changed

[17] City of Destruction – under the condemnation of God and will be destroyed by fire
brimstone. Be content, good neighbours, and go along with me.

What, said Obstinate, and leave our friends and our comforts behind us?[18] Yes, said Christian [19], for that was his name, because that all “which you shall forsake” (2 Cor. 4:18), is not worthy to be compared with a little of that which I am seeking to enjoy; and if you will go along with me, and hold it, you shall fare as I myself, for there, where I go, is enough and to spare (Luke 15:17). Come away, and prove my words.

OBST. What are the things you seek, since you leave all the world to find them?

CHR. I seek [20] an “inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away” (1Peter 1:4), and it is laid up in Heaven (Heb.11:16), and safe there, to be bestowed, at the time appointed, on them that diligently seek it. Read it so, if you will, in my book.

OBST. Tush, said Obstinate, away with your book [21]; will you go back with us, or no?

CHR. No, not I, saith the other; because I have laid my hand to the plough [22] (Luke 9:62).

OBST. Come, then, neighbour Pliable, let us turn again, and go home without him; there is a company of these crazed headed coxcombs, that when they take a fancy by the end, are wiser in their own eyes than seven men that can render a reason (Prov. 26:16).

PLI. Then said Pliable, Do not revile; if what the good Christian says is true, the things he looks after are better than ours [23]; my heart inclines to go with my neighbour.

OBST. What! more fools still? Be ruled by me, and go back; who knows whither such a brain-sick fellow will lead you? Go back, go back, and be wise.

[18] Parable of the Sower

Mat 13:22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

[19] Christian – Bunyan does a play on names. The man has yet to become a Christian and we will later see that his name was initially Graceless. The point one is declared a Christian is a point of meditation as we travel the Pilgrim’s Progress.

ALL “which you shall forsake” is a major portion of this allegory

[20] “I seek” things in heaven

[21] “away with your book” – this was the tactic of Stan in the garden, “Did God really say?”. This is the tactic today. Away with the Book (God’s Law), away with the Old Testament (that is for the Jew), or away with Law/rules because we are in the dispensation of grace!

[22] Commitment

Luke 9:62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

[23] Pliable has no burden (since of guild/sin) no commitment to task before him, no counting of cost!
CHR. Nay, but do thou come with thy neighbour Pliable, there are such things to be had which I spoke of, and many more glories besides; if you believe not me, read here in this book, and for the truth of what is expressed therein, behold, all is confirmed by the blood of Him that made it (Heb. 13:20, 21; 9:17-21).

PLI. Well, neighbour Obstinate, saith Pliable, I begin to come to a point; I intend to go along with this good man, and to cast in my lot with him. But, my good companion, do you know the way to this desired place?

CHR. I am directed by a man whose name is Evangelist, to speed me to a little gate that is before us, where we shall receive instructions about the way.

PLI. Come then, good neighbour, let us be going. Then they went both together.

OBST. And I will go back to my place, said Obstinate; I will be no companion of such misled fantastical fellows.

Now I saw in my dream, that when Obstinate was gone back, Christian and Pliable went talking over the plain; and thus they began their discourse.

CHR. Come, neighbour Pliable, how do you do? I am glad you are persuaded to go along with me; had even Obstinate himself but felt what I have felt, of the powers and terrors of what is yet unseen, he would not thus lightly have given us the back.

PLI. Come, neighbour Christian, since there is none but us two here, tell me now further, what the things are, and how to be enjoyed, whither we are going.

CHR. I can better conceive of them with my mind, than speak of them with my tongue; but yet since you are desirous to know, I will read of them in my book.

PLI. And do you think that the words of your book
are certainly true [24]?

CHR. Yes, verily, for it was made by Him that cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

PLI. Well said. What things are they?

CHR. There is an endless kingdom to be inhabited, and everlasting life to be given us, that we may inhabit that kingdom forever (Isa. 45:17; John 10:27-29).

PLI. Well said. And what else?

CHR. There are crowns of glory to be given us, and garments that will make us shine like the sun in the firmament of Heaven! (2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 3:4; Matt. 13:43).

PLI. This is very pleasant. And what else?

CHR. There shall be no more crying, nor sorrow; for He that is owner of the place will wipe all tears from our eyes (Isa. 25:8; Rev. 7:17, 17; 21:4).

PLI. And what company shall we have there?

CHR. There we shall be with seraphims, and Cherubims, creatures that will dazzle your eyes to look on them. There, also, you shall meet with thousands and ten thousands that have gone before us to that Place; none of them are hurtful, but loving and holy, everyone walking in the sight of God, and standing in His presence with acceptance forever; in a word, there we shall see the elders with their golden crowns; there we shall see the holy virgins with their golden harps; there we shall see men, that by the world were cut in pieces, burnt in flames, eaten of beasts, drowned in the seas, for the love that they bare to the Lord of the Place; all well, and clothed with immortality as with a garment (Isa. 6:2; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; Rev. 7:17; 4:4; 14:1-5; John 12:25; 2 Cor. 5:2-5).

PLI. The hearing of this is enough to ravish one’s heart; but are these things to be enjoyed [25]?

[24] True John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Titus 1:2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

[25] How can we be sharers of the promises of God?

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

The Book Pilgrim’s Progress has as one of its key pictures is what “believeth on Jesus” looks like.

[26] If we are willing to have it.

Mt 7:7-8 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

This Scripture is contained in the longer teaching of Jesus called “The Sermon on the Mount”. In this sermon you will see the topic of the Narrow way, the house built on the rock, etc.

The concept of commitment, cost is part of the imagery of “one willing to have it”. This concept is a main theme of the book the “Pilgrim’s Progress”
How shall we get to be sharers thereof?

CHR. The Lord, the Governor of the country, hath recorded, that in this book, the substance of which is, if we be truly willing to have it, He will bestow it upon us freely [26] (Isa. 55:1, 2, 12; John 7:37; 6:37; Psa. 21:6; 22:17).

PLI. Well, my good companion, glad am I to hear of these things; come on, let us mend our pace.

CHR. I cannot go so fast as I would, by reason of this burden that is on my back.

The Celestial Railroad (Part 1) a short Story by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) [27]

THE CITY OF DESTRUCTION

Not a great while ago, passing through the gate of dreams, I visited that region of the earth in which lies the famous City of Destruction. It interested me much to learn that by the public spirit of some of the inhabitants a railroad has recently been established between this populous and flourishing town and the Celestial City.

Having a little time upon my hands, I resolved to gratify a liberal curiosity by making a trip thither. Accordingly, one fine morning after paying my bill at the hotel, and directing the porter to stow my luggage behind a coach, I took my seat in the vehicle and set out for the station-house. It was my good fortune to enjoy the company of a gentleman--one Mr. Smooth-it-away--who, though he had never actually visited the Celestial City, yet seemed as well acquainted with its laws, customs, policy, and statistics, as with those of the City of Destruction, of which he was a native townsman. Being, moreover, a director of the railroad corporation and one of its largest stock holders, he had it in his power to give me all desirable information respecting that praiseworthy enterprise.

[27] Hawthorne’s short story “the Celestial Railroad” is a satire about modern theology that teaches there is no cost to our quest of the Celestial city.

Satire - A literary work in which human vice or folly is attacked through irony, derision, or wit.

As we read this satire we need to remember what has taken place in the pilgrimage of the Pilgrim.

First we are going to see that instead of a Pilgrim we have a Traveler (on on vacation). Instead of walking with a burden on his back, he is riding in a train with his baggage being handled by a porter.

Mr. Sooth-it-away is his guide/co-passenger

Just as in “The Pilgrim’s Progress” the names of the characters, places and events convey much meaning about the allegory.