

Pilgrim's Progress Study Guide

The Pilgrim's Progress is the story of a man who is seeking to find his way to heaven. Written by John Bunyan, probably in the early months of 1676 when he was in prison in the city jail on the Bedford Bridge in Bedford, England, it represents the Christian life as a journey, a quest for salvation, and explains how everyone can receive the free gift of eternal life.

Summary of places

Draw a chart showing each of these places.

CITY OF DESTRUCTION

The City of Destruction is Christian's hometown and is a symbol of the entire world, with all its sins, corruptions, and sorrow and with no hope of salvation. He decides to flee when he learns that the city will be destroyed by the wrath of God, setting him off on his pilgrimage to the Celestial City.

THE CROSS

The Cross is located on higher ground, and at the foot of it is a tomb. When Christian approaches the Cross, the burden on his back rolls off and into the tomb.

PALACE BEAUTIFUL

The Palace Beautiful is at the top of the Hill, where four sisters live. They examine the conscience of passing pilgrims and provide them shelter and supplies for their journey, including a suit of armor.

DOUBTING CASTLE

Doubting Castle is located off the narrow way that Christian and Hopeful take when they think they have found an easier path. Its master is Giant Despair, capture and imprison the pilgrims until they manage to escape. The dungeon of Doubting Castle is a miserable, unforgiving place representing the doubts and fears of those who feel trapped under the weight of their sin.

THE CELESTIAL CITY

The Celestial City, or Heaven, is the final destination for Christian and Hopeful. Once admitted through the gate by the King, or God, they are surrounded by a choir of angels with trumpet fanfares and are welcomed by the joyous celebration of its residents.

Characters

Describe each character and their role in the story.

Chapter 1: Pilgrim (later called Christian); Evangelist

Chapter 2: Mr. Good-will; The Good King

Chapter 3: Appolyan

Chapter 4: Hopeful; Giant Despair

Chapter 5: Ignorance; The Good Prince

Chapter 1 questions

Fleeing the City of Destruction

1. A pilgrimage is often defined as a long journey to a sacred place. How is our spiritual life similar to that of a pilgrimage or journey? In what way does God invite us into a pilgrimage with Him in Matthew 7:7–8?
2. Read Psalm 38:4. What does the heavy burden Pilgrim is carrying represent?
3. What book is the man carrying, and what happens to him after reading it? Read Hebrews 4:12 and Romans 3:19–20. How would you describe the power of God’s Word?
5. One day as Pilgrim is walking alone, reading his book, he’s overcome with his burden and begins to cry aloud. A man named Evangelist approaches him to see what is wrong. Who does Evangelist represent?
5. Why do you think Bunyan describes Christian’s world as “The City of Destruction?” Do you think that’s an accurate description of our world today? Why or why not?