Previously, Christian was led by Interpreter into a very dark place to meet the man in an iron cage who had no means or prospects of ever being released. Before Interpreter bids Christian farewell and sets him on the next stage of his journey, he takes him to meet another man who is just about rise from his bed. This man is visibly shaking … trembling, as he puts on his clothes. The inquisitive Christian asks, “Why doth this man thus tremble?”

At that point, Interpreter invites the man to explain … He began to tell them how he had dreamt a dream, and it was like no other dream he ever had. … The sky darkened more than he had seen before. The thundering and the lightning were terrifying. He was frightened beyond description. … He was literally shaking with fear! Indeed, he was even in agony because of his fear. Yet, he could do nothing about it. He was powerless. He couldn’t run and hide for there was nowhere for him to shelter.

As he looked up into the night sky, he noticed the clouds were travelling at a very fast pace. At this point, though, the absolute spectacular happened … He saw a wonderful scene, - frightening to him, - but wonderful to every believer who is patiently anticipating the coming of the King, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The man, - in his dream, - witnessed …

**The Triumph**

He “heard a great sound of a trumpet” … It wasn’t the sound of thunder, - he differentiates between the two. He could clearly make out the difference between the noise of thunder and the sound of a trumpet … and this was most definitely the sound of a trumpet. … Paul told the Corinthians, I Cor. 15:51 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. He also told the Thessalonians, I Thess. 4:16 the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. Jesus Himself described how He will return to this earth, Mt. 24:30 then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Indeed, this man to whom Christian and Interpreter were speaking reflects the scene in Lk. 17:34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. 35 Two women shall be grinding together; the
Incidentally, just in case anyone would wonder about the two men in the one bed, v.34 … Jesus was not sanctioning homosexuality. You will notice the word ‘men’ in verses thirty-four and thirty-six, and the word ‘women’ in verse thirty-five are in italics. In other words, those words in italics are not in the original version, - neither Greek or Aramaic (which Jesus spoke). There is nothing here, - or anywhere in Scripture, - to commend the sinful practice of homosexuality. In fact, it is very strongly to the contrary! …It condemns it!

However, as the man related what he saw, the triumph sound of the trumpet and the sight in the sky became even more spectacular. There appeared One sitting upon a cloud, surrounded by thousands of angels. Incredibly, “the heavens were in a burning flame” … and the One sitting upon a cloud and with the thousands accompanying Him “were all in flaming fire”.

What are we to make of this?! We’ll come to the ‘dreamer’ in a few moments … but, what are we as believers to make of what he describes? How much of it do we symbolise? How do we separate the reality from the over-exuberance of human description? Personally, I would prefer to accept the Scriptural record as it is. Otherwise, our imaginations could lead us in all sorts of directions. …

Simply, and yet gloriously, described is the One Who is Jesus Christ coming again personally and certainly, - there is no doubt about that. He is not coming symbolically, He is coming actually … The Bible says Jesus is coming again … and so He is … Paul describes Him as coming back in the clouds … and so does Jesus Himself. Therefore, since the return of Jesus is actual, I don’t see why we should try to explain the clouds in any other way than actual also. It may sound ‘strange’ and out-of-the-ordinary … but there are no words to adequately describe what this event will be like!

In other words, if Scripture says Jesus will return in the clouds, I believe it! It has never happened before, and it will never happen until Jesus returns … And John Bunyan’s point here is that this man had obviously never seen it either! … But for the believer, this is the Triumph of our Saviour’s return to this earth … As Isaiah prophesied, 33:17 Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty.

However, it wasn’t the triumph this man on the bed saw. Instead, he saw …
THE TERROR

... He was absolutely terrified. He was sore with pain! He was paralysed with fear at the sight which brought joy to the others who were waiting for the promised appearing of Christ. ... And so it is these two emotions will greet His appearance, - either absolute delight or absolute dread ... and it was the latter this man experienced.

He attempted to avoid it ... and to run away! It was his natural reaction. He must escape – flee - ... but there was nowhere for him to go! His past now returned with a frightening vengeance ... For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain (Is. 26:21) ... Micah 7:16 The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf. 17 They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of thee ... II Thess. 1:7 when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. ... No wonder the man was gripped with fear!

Then, the call of Christ summoned population of the world to draw near ... and notice He does not offer the option for any to decline! Jesus said, Jn. 5:28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. There will be no escape for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10) ... and this man wasn’t ready! He had no preparation made ... but he had to stand before the judgment throne nonetheless!

I have heard of people mocking the whole concept of being answerable to God ... and of how they will speak to Him ... However, the reality is that when the sinner stands before the throne of God, there will be none speaking but the Judge! And on that day, He will no longer be the Saviour to a lost world. Instead, He will be frightening ... absolutely terrifying!

There will be a ‘separating’ ... and it will be under His direction. He will instruct the angels and they will do His bidding. They will “gather together the tares, the chaff, and stubble, and cast them into the burning lake”. Mt. 3:12 he [Christ, the righteous Judge] will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.
And, in the man’s dream, - you can almost see the fear in his face as he tells what he saw, - he watched as the bottomless pit opened before … “just whereabout I stood”. From that pit the fire roared … Just at that point, the ‘wheat was gathered into the garner’, and the man realised he was left behind. We are not speaking about a ‘secret rapture’ here. I don’t believe the Bible teaches such a phenomenon, - it is a fairly recent eschatological innovation, and it was never taught prior to the 1800’s.

No, the man in his bed was filled with terror as he watched the Redeemed lifted up … and he feared because he was left behind and to be confronted by the terrible judgment of God. There was no ‘second chance’ to amend his ways. All opportunities for salvation were gone! … Listen to the anguish in the man’s voice, “I was left behind. I also sought to hide myself, but I could not; for the Man that sat upon the cloud still kept His eye upon me: my sins also came into my mind: and my conscience did accuse me on every side”.

… And Christian, - as he listened intently, - was enthralled by the account of this man’s dream. He asked, “But what was it that made you so afraid of this sight?” (… Christian would have welcomed it with great excitement … seeing the Lord coming in glory. Once upon a time he would have been frightened too, but this was an event that now filled him with longing anticipation!) Not so for the man relating the dream, though. In a trembling voice the man replied, “This affrighted me most, that the angels gathered up several, and left me behind” … The terrible realization that since he had previously rejected God, now God was rejecting Him forever! … Frightening!! … And, his fear was increased as he stood there at the edge of ‘the pit of Hell’ … with the Judge, - the eternal Christ and everlasting God, - about to condemn him!

You see, when ‘it comes down to it’ the factor that determines our eternal destiny lies in how we stand in relation to the question, Mt. 27:22 What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? That is the most important issue every inhabitant of this world has to confront! They will either respond in one of two ways, - they will either accept Christ as Saviour and Lord, or they will reject Him as Saviour and Lord. There are no ‘in-between’s’! … But when Jesus returns, it will be too late! When the chaff is blown away, only the good seed remains. … Those who are caught up to meet the Lord, they will be with Him forever (I Thess. 4:17). … And those who are left behind will be separated from Him forever in Hell!
And that was why the man was in such terror. … He no longer could believe, - he had left it too late! He had so carelessly and stubbornly rejected his final opportunity to believe. Yes, when Jesus will return there will be triumph for the believer, but there will be terror for the unbeliever.

Now, though, as Christian was watching on, Interpreter has one final question for him … just before he continues on his way, “Hast thou considered all these things?” … (i.e. the picture, p.40; the dusty parlour, p.41; Passion and Patience, p.43; the fire, p.45; the palace, p.46; the man in the iron cage, p.47; the man who had the dream, p.49) … It is also a valid question to each of us this evening, “Hast thou considered all these things?” What impact has our consideration of Christ’s return had upon you? Are you looking forward to it with joy … or with trepidation? Are you ready for it?!

If you were lying in your bed, would you be trying to hide yourself under the sheets … or would you run out to meet Him? … And the alternative, - the only alternative, - to Heaven is Hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched (Mk. 9:44,46,48). Would it be triumph for you, or would it be terror?

It doesn’t matter that we are in a Prayer and Bible Study … You need to be sure you are saved … that Christ has washed away your sins, and that when He calls, you will not be left behind, but lifted up! … That was the point Interpreter was making to Christian … Make sure!

**The Tenacity**

“Keep all things so in thy mind that they may be as a goad in thy sides, to prick thee forward in the way thou must go”. Don’t allow yourself to go to sleep! Remember where the Lord has taken you from, - the City of Destruction. Don’t look back, but keep looking onward! Remember the blood of Jesus washed has away your sin. Keep going on. Keep in mind how precious He is to you, and how precious you are to Him. Keep in step with the Comforter, - the Holy Spirit, - Who promises to guide you into the truth of the Word of God. Someone has said, “Hope without fear may be presumptuous, while fear without hope may be depressive. But both hope and fear honour God (Ps. 2:11, Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling).”

I know I’m heading towards Heaven, and it will be my final resting-place, but I also know I can never take the next step for granted. …
There are, - as Christian will continue to discover, - too many hurdles and traps waiting for us along the way … too many who would pretend to befriend, only to find they are not in the company of our Master. And so, the Christian pilgrim ‘gathers himself together’ for the next stage of his journey. He is tenacious in following after Christ, Phil. 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

As they bid each other farewell, Interpreter calls out, “The Comforter be always with thee, good Christian, to guide thee in the way that leads to the city” … May God’s richest blessing go with you until you reach Glory!

And, just before he left, Christian responded to Interpreter with much gratitude for the experiences and wisdoms that he had imparted to him, “So Christian went on his way saying, Here I have seen things rare, and profitable; Things pleasant, dreadful, things to make me stable in what I have begun to take in hand: Then let me think on them, and understand for what purpose they appeared, and let me be thankful, O good Interpreter, to thee.”

CONCLUSION

Triumph, terror and tenacity. That’s what we see here! As he set out again on his journey Christian now knows more of the righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. 14:17). He is moving on, confident in the Lord, and abounding in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost (Rom. 15:13). Keep on keeping on!

We are looking forward to a great day when Christ will come again, and until then, we need to seek to walk worthy of our high calling, and increasing in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:10).

It’s our duty and our privilege, therefore, to be obedient to the instruction we have so wonderfully and graciously been blessed with … to … II Tim. 3:14 continue … in the things which [we have] learned and [have] been assured of, knowing of whom [we have] learned them; … for we have … v.15 the holy scriptures, which are able to make [us] wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. May we be faithful to the claims of the Lord as we seek to serve Him, in anticipation of His coming again! Amen.