Christian was having a great time in the Palace Beautiful. It was what he needed after some of the harrowing experiences that had met him along the way, since his departure from the City of Destruction. The Lord knows when we need a rest, and He often provides for us when we need it most. Christian had forged a wonderful bond of fellowship with Piety, Prudence and Charity … and some others they had also met in the Palace Beautiful. They were at one in their love and devotion to the “Lord of the hill”. … And they also had forged a commitment to each other, and this was demonstrated in their care for Christian as they sought to further prepare him for recommencing his journey to the Celestial City. … And isn’t it a fact that we must never grow too comfortable as we head towards Heaven because there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed (Josh. 13:1)!

The Study  They brought him first of all to the Study. As a pastor, I am in the privileged position where I spend many hours each week in the study. However, one of the dangers any pastor must contend with is the danger that he neglects his own study time. … He can become so busy preparing for other people’s needs that he can neglect preparing for his own. Therefore, the emphasis was being placed upon Christian to make provision for his own study of God’s Word, II Tim. 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. The means by which a Christian matures in the faith depends upon the regular and the correct study of God’s Word. It is described as food to our souls (Ps. 63:5), and as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Ps. 119:105). There are many such descriptions that emphasise the place of God’s Word in the development of the believer. We cannot over-emphasise its importance.

There are many good easy-to-read commentaries on the Scriptures that open up something of the deeper meanings and their applications. Bible study does not need to be laborious, but it is necessary for our spiritual development and progress in the faith. Obviously, this is a point we could never stress enough … and we take heed of how it was impressed upon Christian.

In particular, his attention was drawn to “the pedigree of the Lord of the hill”. The Bible is about God, and it teaches the reader concerning Him. It is the only Book of its kind, and everything it teaches is of absolute authority and truth. Christian’s tutors presented Christ to him as the Son of the Ancient of days, Who came by an eternal generation … and an eternal declaration. …
He came at Christ’s command. Once again, this short description is a profound statement concerning the Godhead, and it began by paying particular attention to Dan. 7:9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. 10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened ... 13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Christ’s work began in eternity, - it was constituted, prepared, and even fulfilled in the mind of God before any of it took place. Each part of that plan had been guaranteed success and satisfaction even before the world was formed. God’s Word explains to us how He carried out His plans in time ... through the servants He used, the activities He directed, and the doctrines that defined their path. It speaks of a kingdom that never will be dissolved and a plan that never can be hindered. It is the greatest encouragement for the people of God who face the rigours of life ... and so William Gurnall explained, “The Christian is bred by the Word and he must be fed by it”. Consequently, the famous quote from J.C. Ryle says, “We must read our Bibles like men digging for hidden treasure”.

**THE ARMOURY** The following day Christian is taken into the armoury. He is brought to focus on the resources available to the believer. Based upon Paul’s teaching of the believer’s armour in Eph. 6:10-18, Christian is shown that he must actively and consciously ‘put on’ each aspect of the battle-dress. Wearing the armour is not as a result of ‘being saved’ ... he must actively equip himself for the warfare with the armour supplied by God. No soldier would ever contemplate going out against the enemy if he was unfamiliar with his weaponry ... so the importance of the sword of the Spirit, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, prayer, the Gospel shoes of peace are presented to Christian. In fact, Christian was shortly to discover, - during his confrontation with Apollyon, - how invaluable his armour would be.
And how encouraging it is that John Bunyan makes the point, “there was here enough of this to harness out as many men for the service of their Lord, as there be stars in the Heaven for multitude”. In other words, it is the same weaponry we must use today that the saints of God throughout every generation have used. We don’t depend upon our own ability or upon the wisdom we have accrued from the embellishments of men … we depend upon the ancient God-honoured instructions the faithful have always obeyed.

Piety, Prudence and Charity reminded Christian of the old battle-armour belonging to Moses (Ex. 4:1-5, 17, 20; 7:8-12), and Jael (Judg. 4:17-22), Gideon (Judg. 7:16-23), Shamgar, (Judg. 3:31), Samson (Judg. 15:14-17), David (I Sam. 17:38-51), and the sword (II Thess. 2:3-8) “with which their Lord will kill the man of sin in the day that he shall rise up to the prey”. The victory is the Lord’s … and as long as the Lord’s people will battle with the Lord’s implements the way the Lord prescribes, they will be more than conquerors!

**The Roof-Top**

On the fourth and final day of Christian’s time in the Palace Beautiful, he was eager to press forward … but there was one final view they wanted him to see. It is good to know where you are heading for it encourages you to travel with a ‘skip in your step’. They explained to him that sometimes the clouds would obscure the view of the beautiful Delectable Mountains they wanted to show him. However, when they took him onto the rooftop what he saw was so absolutely magnificent, - there wasn’t a single cloud in the sky. He could see the glory that was ahead of him … and how excited he was … He longed to continue his journey.

He looked south, - just as Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south (Gen. 12:9). He saw the beauty that stretched out before him … and it was something of how he had described it to Pliable … near the beginning of his journey (cf. pp.20-21). His excitement and expectation was growing … and he could see in the distance the beginning of his destination. He longed for the comforts and privileges that awaited him … “My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue”. Such is Immanuel’s Land … It’s under the same ownership as the One to Whom the Palace Beautiful belongs. It’s the next stage of the journey to which Christian must strive to enter.

The Christian pilgrim never stands still. The journey we are on always takes us forward, - that is God’s purpose in saving us. He doesn’t save us to go back.
He has a destination for us to achieve and each one whom He directs unto that path He has put it in their hearts to achieve it. He often gives us a glimpse of what is ahead to encourage us to keep going on. ... And it is worth it ... it is always worth it. Christian had no inclination to go back ... he wanted to keep going forward.

It’s what Paul referred to also, Phil. 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. There we shall be in good company, - the very best, - and we’ll never have to move on. We are another day closer to glory, and the Lord takes us up on to the rooftop. Yes, sometimes the view can be clear, - as it was when Christian looked out upon the beautiful countryside, - ... but there are also other times when the view is far from clear ... On those occasions, however, He always continues to point us in the right direction ... and even though it may prove difficult to know what is round the next corner He continues to guard and guide His people on the path He has sent them. ...

And when the journey is completed and we finally arrive in the Heavenly destination ... when all the storms are forever past, and we have crossed over into glory, “It will be worth it all when we see Jesus ... One glimpse of His dear face, all sorrow will erase” ... And so, - like Christian, - until then, we must continue to “bravely run the race till we see Christ”. Amen.