

THE CELESTIAL RAILROAD

January 13th, 2019 – The Celestial Railroad

Part 2

Today's Illustrated Message continues reading at The Wicket Gate & The Burden of Sin. Please click on this link to read along from this booklet on pages 2 and 3, "[The Celestial Railroad](#)". If you have not yet read Pilgrim's Progress and would like to parallel it with this booklet, you can click on this link to read [Pilgrim's Progress](#).

We read the words of Jesus in **Luke 11:9-13** where He says; *"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"*

In Pilgrim's Progress, Christian arrives at The Wicket Gate and meets with the Gatekeeper named, Good-Will, who is Jesus, and it is there that he is born-again, converted to become a Christian. Prior to this, he has been under the conviction of the Holy Spirit because of his sins where he flees the City of Destruction, and now he's at The Wicket Gate talking with Good-Will. Good-Will is a very distinguished, stoic, and dignified man, who almost you could say, interrogates Christian as to why he wants to come through The Wicket Gate. He asks him where he's from, why is he knocking, where his family is at and why he wants to come through.

But what really stands out, is that Christian came to that gate with a humble heart, acknowledging his need of a Saviour. He knew he was a sinner. His attitude was not that just of believing in the Lord, but knowing that he was a sinner fleeing from the destructive nature of sin. He didn't come with the attitude of being a good guy, but with great conviction of sin. He was told to go to and thru this gate but needed instruction as to what and where to go. He wanted to be born again even though he didn't know what that meant.

We read about this born again experience in **John 3:1-7** where Jesus is having a conversation with a 'religious leader'. He says; *"There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"*

Interesting isn't it, that this religious leader who followed everything in the Old Testament Law to the jot and tittle, visits Jesus at night to have a 007 conversation with him about salvation. This flawless Pharisee under the Law, should have had enough for salvation, right. He believed, didn't he? Wouldn't that have been enough? Obviously, his belief wasn't enough. He had to be born of the Spirit of God, Jesus told him.

The once narrow Wicket Gate that Christian had to go through with the sin on his back, is now a gate to board the train on The Celestial Railroad. It seems that there is no need now to walk the straight and narrow path. It's not the same gate, it's different. In the Celestial Railroad we read; *"Nevertheless, we got over without accident, and soon found ourselves at the station little Wicket Gate, which formerly, as old pilgrims will recollect, stood directly across the highway, and by its inconvenient narrowness, was a great obstruction to the traveler of liberal mind and expansive stomach."*

THE CELESTIAL RAILROAD

How many “Christians”, have entered the Wicket Gate at the Church they attend without having been born again, converted by Christ the Gatekeeper, and instead have boarded the religious pilgrimage with a privileged liberal mindset that is void of repentance of sin and conversion?

Let’s look at the definition of the word **liberal**. Liberal is defined as something that is not restricted. An example of liberal is an education covering a wide range of subjects. Liberal means something that is generous or large. An example of liberal is a sizable amount of money given to charity. A liberal is someone who is open-minded and progressive in their views. An example of liberal is someone who likes new ideas that will bring progress even if they are not traditional.

In Pilgrim’s Progress, Christian says after knocking on the gate; *“CHRISTIAN: Here is a poor burdened sinner who comes from the City of Destruction. But more importantly, I am going to Mount Zion [the Celestial City], so that I may be delivered from the wrath to come. Therefore sir, since I have been informed that the way to my destination is through this Gate, I would like to know if you are willing to let me enter.”*

Jesus is the only way, truth and life, and no one comes to Father God except through Him – He is the gate. In **John 16:7-11** Jesus says; *“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”*

The conviction of sin that Christian was living under, compelled him to follow the instruction he had been given to go The Wicket Gate. If today you are under conviction of sin and are in need of a Saviour, don’t allow yourself to be fast tracked onto a religious pilgrimage, without having repented of your sins and being converted and born again, don’t even enter that gate, run from it, do not get on that religious train.

Jesus says this in **Luke 13:24**; *“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.”* Why can’t they enter as they stand and knock, wanting to gain entrance? I think it’s because they’re not willing to repent of their sin. They’re coming with a religious privileged mindset but are unwilling to say that they’re a sinner that’s in need of a Saviour. Entering the narrow Gate requires repentance, without repentance you will not be able to enter into a relationship with Christ.

In the commentary of the Wicket Gate, it says in BunyanMinistries.com that; *“He seeks deliverance from coming wrath. This pilgrim differs from many modern counterparts who respond to religious appeals so that they might obtain improvements in their self-image, more harmonious human relationships, and relief from discomfort.”*

More than likely then, those who are showing up to the Gate with this objective, are the ones who are not able to enter. Are you like those who respond to religious appeals, so that you might obtain improvements in your self-image, more harmonious human relationships, and relief from discomfort? If so, you won’t be able to get into Heaven. You have to repent of your sins, humble yourself and confess your sins to Jesus. It doesn’t matter how much you believe or how good you are, you have to go to Jesus a certain way. There is a certain protocol that Jesus requires for a person to be born again and receive salvation. You can’t jump the fence either.

In the Celestial Railroad we read; *“Instead of a lonely and ragged man with a huge burden on his back, plodding along sorrowfully on foot while the whole city hooted after him, here were parties of the first gentry and most respectable people in the neighborhood, setting merely a summer tour. Among the gentlemen were characters of deserved eminence, magistrates, politicians, and men of wealth, by whose brethren. In the ladies’ apartment, too, I rejoiced to distinguish some of most elevated circles of the Celestial City.”*

THE CELESTIAL RAILROAD

It's portrayed here that these were of the upper echelon of society, but there were probably their servants and those of middle-class stature too. It has the appearance of something good, doesn't it? Something of honour and very religious, right?

How many people are on a Christian Pilgrimage today, without having first been converted and born again, and are seated among those described above who also are not born again, riding on what appears to be a fast track to heaven, but in reality, is a fast track to hell.

Again, that's why Jesus when speaking to Nicodemus who was a religious Pharisee, told him in **John 3:3**; *“Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

In the Celestial Railroad we read; *“There was much pleasant conversation about the news of the day topics of business, politics, or the lighter matters of amusement; while religion though indubitably the main thing at heart, was thrown tastefully into the background. Even an infidel would have heard little or nothing to shock his sensibility.”*

Pretty crazy to think that 'religion' was the main thing at heart, or the main reason they were going to board the train...but it was thrown into the background! How is that possible? One would argue, 'isn't it what's in the heart that counts', or 'the Lord knows my heart', or 'the Lord sees my heart' or 'I have a good heart, I believe in Him'.

Christian was heavenly minded, with one destination in mind and that was heaven, The Celestial City. You've heard that saying, 'he or she is so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good.' When your truly born again, your conversation changes, religion is on the forefront and not tastefully thrown into the background. In secular settings you may appear no earthly good pertaining to the conversation of the day. You're not able to fit in to the amusement of business, pleasantries and politics. Instead, the first thing coming out of your mouth is Jesus and what He's doing in your life and the lives of those around you. With those of a 'religious mind-set', you have to smooth it over, to fit in with the culture.

Is your Christian walk full of much pleasant conversation about the news of the day, topics of business, politics, or the lighter matters of amusement; while religion though indubitably the main thing at heart, is thrown tastefully into the background? If so, you need to get off that train at the next stop, and enter the narrow gate, repent of your sins and be converted, born again.

Philippians 4:8 says these powerful words to repudiate and contradict the religious system; *“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”* This should be the top priority of the life of a born again Christian.

Those boarding the train however, are not born again and just believe they're going to heaven, but even in their believing, you see that they're not talking about this religious pilgrimage they're embarking on. They are the “Christian 007's”, going stealth.

This is why Jesus said in **Matthew 7:13-14**; *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*

Again, how come there are few who find it? How many people have you talked to who say, 'I believe, oh, I believe in Jesus'? Well why won't they be entering? Because they're not willing to go through the narrow gate, having a humble heart in true repentance asking Jesus to forgive them of their sins to be born again.

THE CELESTIAL RAILROAD

After Christian is born-again, going thru the Wicket Gate, he wants to be relieved of this burden on his back, but is advised to continue to carry them to the place of deliverance. Let's read what the story says in Pilgrim's Progress; *"Then I saw in my dream that Christian further asked Goodwill if he was able to help him take off the burden remaining on his back, since it seemed impossible to remove without assistance. Good-will advised that he should be content to bear this load until he came to the Place of Deliverance further ahead; then the burden would fall from off his back by itself."*

When you become a Christian, at some point in your walk with Christ, you will be delivered from the burdens that you carry and be set free from it once and for all.

Jesus says in **Matthew 11:28-29**; *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*

This burden of sin though in The Celestial Railroad, is dealt with in a "different manner". We read; *"One great convenience of the new method of going on pilgrimage I must not forget to mention. Our enormous burdens, instead of being carried on our shoulders, as had been the custom of old, were all snugly deposited in the baggage car, and, as I was assured, would be delivered to their respective owners at the journey's end."*

We see Jesus conversing with the religious Pharisees, (the one's who followed every jot and tittle of the Law), again in **John 8:43-45** where he says; *"Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me."*

What a stern and tough word that Jesus rebuked these religiously perfect men with! They gloated and gloried in their ability to follow the Old Testament Law to the nth degree. Religiously flawless. But they missed the Messiah, Jesus Christ, their redemption, who was the only one now who could give them access to heaven. No one thought that the Pharisees and teachers of the Law could miss heaven because they 'believed'...but they would because they denied that Jesus was the only way to the Heavenly Father now.

Those on The Celestial Train are not born again, therefore, if Jesus is not their Father, then the devil is their father. There are Christians today that have a religious belief system that has been handed down like the Pharisees; 'grandpa built this church, my father preached in this pulpit, his brother was an evangelist who preached in this pulpit, his mother fasted every week, I was raised in this church...I believe.'

Religion, without being born again, will provide a way for you to **not** carry the burden of sin, and help you to stow it away in a safe place out of site out of mind. They don't have to look at it, see it, feel it or carry its weight, and oh, no one else sees it either. How suitable and handy is that! Religion knows how to do that, religion knows that you believe.

In Pilgrim's Progress, prior to Christians conversion, it says; *"GOOD-WILL: I am willing with all my heart. (And at that he immediately opened the Gate.) Now as Christian was stepping through the Gate, he was quite surprised when suddenly, Good-will pulled him through. In seeking an explanation for this forceful manner, Christian was told, "Just a little distance outside this Gate, a strong castle has been built and its captain is named Beelzebub. From there, both he and his army shoot arrows at those who seek entrance at the Gate, endeavoring to slay pilgrims before they pass through."*

You can see Jesus (Good-Will), with his arms open wide to receive Christian with all his heart. This was Christian's conversion going thru the Wicket Gate. For Christian, it wasn't only the jeering, mocking and

THE CELESTIAL RAILROAD

ridiculing from friends and family that he faced, now, he's got the devil launching all out spiritual warfare against him to keep him from passing through the Gate. Or you could say, to keep him from becoming born again.

Again, a commentary from BunyanMinistries.com says this; *“Good-Will describes the enemy. Close by is an enemy castle directed by Captain Beelzebub (Matt. 12:24-27), the prince of devils, who, with his hosts, assails pilgrims so that they might be rendered incapable of entering the Wicket-Gate. This artillery of “flaming missiles” (Eph. 6:16), especially discouraging suggestions, includes many weapons that are tailored to suit a pilgrim’s particular weaknesses.”*

In the Celestial Railroad we read; *“Another thing, likewise, the benevolent reader will be delighted to understand. It may be remembered that there was an ancient feud between Prince Beelzebub and the keeper of the Wicket Gate, and that the adherents of the former distinguished personage were accustomed to shoot deadly arrows at honest pilgrims while knocking at the door. This dispute, much to the credit as well as the illustrious potentate above mentioned, as of the worthy and enlightened directors of the railroad, has been practically arranged upon the principle of mutual 'compromise'. The Prince’s subjects are now pretty numerously employed about the station house, some in taking care of the baggage, others in collecting fuel, feeding the engines, and such congenial occupations; and I can conscientiously affirm, that persons more generally agreeable to the passengers, are not to be found on any railroad. Every good heart must surely exult at so satisfactory an arrangement of an immemorial difficulty.”*

What a blatant lie that Mr. Smooth-It-Away says that Jesus, the keeper of the Wicket-Gate and Prince Beelzebub came to a mutual ‘compromise’. There was no compromise. Jesus defeated the devil at the cross, once and for all time.

If your father is the devil, he's going to provide all you could possibly want for your religious pilgrimage. You're no threat to his kingdom. Therefore, the demons that were shooting at Christian are now employed at the Celestial Railroad Station, to ensure you have a comfortable, enjoyable, safe ride to what you believe to be heaven, but really is hell. Remember, when a person checks into The Celestial Railroad Station, there is no repentance required, no need to be born again. But...the people are on this train because they ‘believe’.

If you're on this train today, you need to get off it now, don't hesitate. Enter the narrow gate, repent and ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins, be converted, born again and walk the straight and narrow road to the Celestial City.

The Celestial Railroad is beyond comparison to that of a seeker friendly church, teaching the doctrine of eternal security (once saved always saved); in that their salvation is based not on that of being born again, but rather religious tradition that says that believing in the Bible is sufficient to secure their salvation for eternity. Mr. Smooth-It-Away on the Celestial Railroad, is clear that being born again is unnecessary, archaic and a thing of the past.

If you're on this train today, get off at the next stop and repent, be converted and be born again. **James 2:17-20** says this; *“Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”*

This scripture is so clear in saying that you may have faith, or that you believe in God or Jesus, but if there are no works, or manifestations that of your faith. It's dead. The Apostle James goes on to say that even the demons ‘BELIEVE’...and Tremble!

THE CELESTIAL RAILROAD

Believing in Jesus, or believing that you're on a spiritual journey to heaven, without confessing and repenting of your sins, is dead. It's a dead work. Believing, without having entered thru the narrow gate by asking Jesus to forgive you of your sins that you might be spiritually born again, is dead works. There may be no doubt that you believe, otherwise you wouldn't be on the train or pilgrimage if you didn't believe, but if you're not able to repent of your sins and ask Jesus to come into your heart and take lordship of your life, if you don't see yourself as a sinner in need of a Saviour, it's dead works.

If you'd like to truly become a Christian, you can pray this prayer from your heart.

Jesus, I acknowledge that I'm a sinner. I know that I need to be born of Your Spirit to inherit eternal life. I see now that it's not enough to only believe in You, but I need to receive You as Lord and Saviour. I confess that I'm a sinner who needs to be saved. I confess my sins to you now (name them), I repent of them, and I ask you to come into my heart to be my Lord and my Saviour by the power of the Holy Spirit. In your name Jesus, amen.