
THE DELECTABLE MOUNTAINS

HAVING NARROWLY ESCAPED from Doubting Castle, the two pilgrims find themselves in a lovely area called the Delectable Mountains of Emmanuel's land, which belonged to the Lord of the hill. We can recall that Christian was able to see this lovely land from the House Beautiful and was told at that time the gates of the City would be visible from the Delectable Mountains.

Earlier in the allegory we discovered that the House Beautiful represented the visible, corporate fellowship of the local church. It was where Christian received his armor. Discretion, Prudence, Piety and Charity were there in pastoral leadership to give oversight to the church.

The Delectable Mountains represent the church in its teaching ministry. God gives pastor-teachers to the church for the maturing of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11–13). Bunyan situates the Delectable Mountains a significant distance from the House Beautiful because the believer does not attain a level of maturity from the teaching ministry of the church overnight. These things are not automatic, and it is only after a significant amount of time spent in Bible study and walking with God that the maturing believer begins to see the gates of the City. The four Shepherds are

named Knowledge, Watchful, Experience and Sincere. The pastor-teacher must attain these characteristics to some degree in order to effectively exercise his gifts to the body.

"Where did you come from? How did you get into the way?" A good under-shepherd will always want to know the spiritual pilgrimage of his people, and the good pastor-teacher will also want to bring his people to the point where they all can see the gates of the City from the Delectable Mountains. When the teaching ministry of the church can accomplish these things, responsible shepherding is taking place.

Three areas to be carefully avoided are pointed out to Christian and Hopeful before they continue on their way. The hill called Error showed them those who had climbed too high (Hymenaeus and Philetus)—they went beyond Scripture and perished. The hill Caution revealed a number who were made blind and now walk among the tombs, perishing by way of Doubting Castle. The third is a warning to avoid the by-way to Hell by being watchful of hypocrisy.

Finally, the hill Clear is shown to Christian and Hopeful, but they barely can see the gates of the City because they know that they had escaped Doubting Castle by a hair's breadth and were still shaken from their experience.
