



April 2009—*Keeping Life in Perspective*

Most people who will read this reflection lead busy lives, seeking to achieve a variety of personal, family, and career goals. To be fully engaged in life is a good thing, but sometimes our daily existence can become so filled with good things that we lose sight of an important reality that helps us remain grounded in our life with God. As C.S. Lewis reminds us, maintaining a daily awareness that Jesus Christ is coming back is needful for a healthy soul.

The doctrine of the Second Coming teaches us that we do not and cannot know when the world drama will end. The curtain may be rung down at any moment: say, before you have finished reading this paragraph. This seems to some people intolerably frustrating. So many things would be interrupted. Perhaps you were going to get married next month, perhaps you were going to get a raise next week: you may be on the verge of a great scientific discovery: you may be maturing great social and political reforms. Surely no good and wise God would be so very unreasonable as to cut all this short? Not *now*, of all moments!

But we think thus because we keep on assuming that we know the play. We do not know the play. We do not even know whether we are in Act I or Act V. The Author knows. The audience, if there is an audience (if angels and archangels and all the company of Heaven fill the pit and the stalls), may have an inkling. But we, never seeing the play from outside, never meeting the characters except the tiny minority who are “on” in the same scenes as ourselves, wholly ignorant of the future and very imperfectly informed about the past, cannot tell at what moment the end ought to come. That it will come when it ought, we may be sure; but we waste our time in guessing when that will be. That it has a meaning we may be sure, but we cannot see it. When it is over, we may be told. We are led to expect that the Author will have something to say to each of us on the part that each of us has played. The playing it well is what matters infinitely.

The doctrine of the Second Coming, then, is not to be rejected because it conflicts with our favorite modern mythology. It is, for that very reason, to be the more valued and made more frequently the subject of meditation. It is the medicine our condition especially needs.

Jesus himself says that when he returns, people will be “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.” Preoccupied with the busyness and distractions of life, most will be unprepared to meet him. If we want to live sober, godly lives in this corrupt generation and to “play our part well,” a daily discipline of reminding ourselves of his imminent return can do wonders for us.

*“Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*

MATTHEW 24:44 (ESV)

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C.S. Lewis, *The World's Last Night* (New York: Harcourt, 1988), pp. 105–106.