

Reflections

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We Must Be Ready At All Moments

At

the beginning of an essay titled “The World’s Last Night,” C.S. Lewis stated that while “(t)here are many reasons why the modern Christian... may hesitate to give to the doctrine of Christ’s Second Coming that emphasis which was usually laid on it by our ancestors”, it seemed to him that it was “impossible to retain in any recognisable form our belief in the Divinity of Christ and the truth of the Christian revelation while abandoning, or even persistently neglecting, the promised, and threatened, Return.”¹ Later in the essay, Lewis offered a short summary of Christ’s teaching in this area, and emphasized a particular implication that is relevant for each of us. An excerpt follows.

[Our Lord’s] teaching on the subject quite clearly consisted of three propositions. (1) That he will certainly return. (2) That we cannot possibly find out when. (3) And that therefore we must always be ready for him.

Note the *therefore*. Precisely because we cannot predict the moment, we must be ready at all moments.



You will not, I most solemnly assure you you will not, see me approaching.

Our Lord repeated this practical conclusion again and again; as if the promise of the Return had been made for the sake of this conclusion alone. Watch, watch, is the burden of his advice. I shall come like a thief. You will not, I most solemnly assure you you will not, see me approaching. If the householder had known at what time the burglar would arrive, he would have been ready for him. If the servant had known when his absent employer would come home, he would not have been found drunk in the kitchen. But they didn’t. Nor will you. Therefore you must be ready at all times. The point is surely simple enough. The schoolboy does not know which part of his Virgil lesson he will be made to translate: that is why he must be prepared to translate *any* passage. The sentry does not know at what time an enemy will attack, or an officer inspect, his post: that is why he must keep awake *all* the time. The Return is wholly unpredictable. There will be wars and rumours of wars and all kinds of catastrophes, as there always are. Things will be, in that sense, normal, the hour before the heavens roll up like a scroll. You cannot guess it. If you could, one chief purpose for which it was foretold would be frustrated. And God’s purposes are not so easily frustrated as that...

The doctrine of the Second Coming has failed, so far as we are concerned, if it does not make us realize that at every moment of every year in our lives Donne’s question “What if this present were the world’s last night?” is equally relevant...²

As Bill Kynes has explained, the Bible gives us “a narrative that tells the story of humanity in this world from beginning to end,” and “(t)he four acts of this drama can be captured in the expressions Creation, Fall, Redemption, and New Creation.” Jesus’s second coming will occur as part of the final act. Kynes observes that “(t)he Bible ends with a vision given to the apostle John of the final struggle with evil and the vindication of Jesus and His followers when Jesus Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords.”³

As we go about our every day lives, let us be thankful that God has revealed in Scripture that the time is coming when Jesus Christ will return as King and kings and Lord of lords. And let us live our lives so as to be ready at all moments.



“so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him”.

HEBREWS 9:28 (ESV)

¹ C.S. Lewis, “The World’s Last Night” in *The World’s Last Night and Other Essays*, New York: Harcourt, 1987, p. 93.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 107-109.

³ Bill Kynes, “How to Read the Bible, Part 1: Introduction and Overview of the Bible”, *Knowing & Doing*, Spring 2019, pdf, pp. 6-7, 16.

