



Our life here is but a shadow¹ of things to come. Yet we seem to be attached to our lives here on earth.

When we come into this world, it is with but one condition, we must leave. There is an old saw, “There are only two things that are inevitable, Death and Taxes.” That is, of course, not true. There is only one thing which is, on one level, inevitable, that is Death. At the same time, be aware that not paying your taxes may hasten your earthly death.

As Christians, our Lord gave His earthly Life that we might have life eternal. You must understand eternal life starts the moment you accept it, not after the demise of your earthly body. From that time on you must live your life accordingly. It is all not over when you leave this earthly existence, you continue on. So live as if you will be accountable for your actions for eternity, for that is part of the gift.

Consider this brief letter from Jack Lewis, the Anglican writer, author of the well-known Chronicles of Narnia to his friend Mary who is nearing her departure from earth:

To Mary Willis Shelburne: On how to rehearse for death and how to diminish fear.

¹ Jack Lewis calls the earth The Shadowlands and says in heaven all is clear and bright, not dark and muddled as here on earth.

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Pain is terrible, but surely you need not have fear as well? Can you not see death as the friend and deliverer? It means stripping off that body which is tormenting you: like taking off a hair-shirt or getting out of a dungeon. What is there to be afraid of? You have long attempted (and none of us does more) a Christian life. Your sins are confessed and absolved. Has this world been so kind to you that you should leave it with regret? There are better things ahead than any we leave behind.

Remember, though we struggle against things because we are afraid of them, it is often the other way round—we get afraid because we struggle. Are you struggling, resisting? Don't you think Our Lord says to you '*Peace, child, peace. Relax. Let go. Underneath are the everlasting arms. Let go, I will catch you. Do you trust me so little?*'

Of course, this may not be the end. Then make it a good rehearsal.

Yours (and like you a tired traveler near the journey's end) Jack

CS Lewis

The Collected Letters of CS Lewis, Volume III

Jack Lewis is telling his friend she has nothing to worry about, there is nothing to fear in death. He often alluded to what we will find in heaven by referring to the earth as the Shadowlands. Just as Paul wrote in Chapter 13 of his first letter to the people of Corinth, *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.* This earth is merely a shadow of the real world that we call by the term Heaven.

We know we cannot get into Heaven unless we are accounted as perfect in the final judgment. Yet, we can never be perfect. We are imperfect creatures with free will, a combination which clearly precludes perfection. Yet, through Jesus' one sacrifice, made one time, for all time, for all mankind, we are accounted as perfect. His sacrifice is the only possible way for us to enter into Heaven. Nothing else will make it happen. No other way than by the sacrifice of the Son will you get into Heaven. Has God made arrangements for other religions? Consider once again the explanation of Jack Lewis:

I have been asked to tell you what Christians believe, and I am going to begin by telling one thing that Christians do not need to believe. If you are a Christian you do not have to believe that all the other religions are simply wrong all through. If you are an atheist you do have to believe that the main point in all the religions are simply wrong all through. If you are an atheist you do have to believe that the main point in all the religions of the whole world is simply one huge mistake. If you are a Christian, you are free to think that all these religions, even the queerest ones, contain at least some hint of the truth. When I was an atheist I had to try to persuade myself that most of the human race have always been wrong about the question that mattered to them most; when I became a Christian I was able to take a more liberal view. But, of course, being a Christian does mean thinking that where Christianity differs from other religions, Christianity is right and they are wrong. As in arithmetic—there is only one right answer to a sum, and all other answers are wrong: but some of the wrong answers are much nearer being right than others. (CS Lewis, Mere Christianity, page 43)

But the truth is God has not told us what His arrangements about other people are. We do know that no man can be saved except through Christ; we do not know that only those who know Him can be saved through Him. But in the meantime, if you are worried about the people outside, the most unreasonable thing you can do is remain outside yourself. (CS Lewis, Mere Christianity, page 65)

The real point of all this is that we do not know what arrangements, if any, God has made for other people. We know what arrangements He made for us when He sent His Son to give His life that we might live. We don't want to take any chances, look at what Jesus himself said:

John 14:1-6

LET not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. ⁴ And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. ⁵ Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? ⁶ Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (BCP 331)

So, once you die, how long until you show up in Heaven? Again, look to the source, Jesus on the Cross speaking to the thief, as related by Luke in Chapter 23, Verse 43:

⁴³ And Jesus said unto him, *Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

When the time is near, have no fear. Our Lord has gone before us and a place is ready for each of us. What will it be like? The only one hundred percent certain answer is, *You won't be disappointed.* I think Jack Lewis hit it right on the money when he referred to earth as The Shadowlands.

Trust in God and dread nought