

## **The Personal Theology of CS Lewis**

Coast School of Theology; Pastor Earl Miles; October 14, 2018

*Lewis on the Christian Life: Becoming Truly Human in the Presence of God* – Joe Rigney

**Clive Staples Lewis** (1898–1963) was one of the intellectual giants of the twentieth century and arguably one of the most influential writers of his day. He was a Fellow and Tutor in English Literature at Oxford University until 1954, when he was unanimously elected to the Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University, a position he held until his retirement. Lewis wrote more than thirty books, allowing him to reach a vast audience, and his works continue to attract thousands of new readers every year. C. S. Lewis's most distinguished and popular accomplishments include *Mere Christianity*, *Out of the Silent Planet*, *The Great Divorce*, *The Screwtape Letters*, and the universally acknowledged classics in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. To date, the Narnia books have sold over 100 million copies and been transformed into three major motion pictures. – cslewis.com

### **What is *the* message of CS Lewis?**

‘Thus, we begin with these three facts: (1) You are here and now; (2) God is here and now; (3) God demands all of you. These three facts yield a fourth: (4) Every moment of every day, you are confronted with a choice – either place God at the center of your life or place something else there. Either acknowledge the way the world really is, or attempt to live in a fantasy of your own devising. Either surrender to your Creator and Lord, or rise up and assert your own independence. Reality, says Lewis, ‘presents us with an absolutely unavoidable ‘either-or.’ (*The Great Divorce*) – Joe Rigney, 29

### **Why is God so hidden?**

‘We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere incognito. – *Letters to Malcolm*

### **What are we to think of God?**

‘All sorts of people are fond of repeating the Christian statement that ‘God is love.’ But they seem not to notice that the words ‘God is love’ have no real meaning unless God contains at least two Persons. Love is something that one person has for another person. If God was a single person, then before the world was made, He was not love. – *Mere Christianity*

### **Why is there evil and suffering in the world?**

‘What Satan put into the heads of our remote ancestors was the idea that they could ‘be like gods’ – could set up on their own as they had created themselves – be their own masters – invent some sort of happiness for themselves outside of God, apart from God. And out of that hopeless attempt has come nearly all that we call human history – money, poverty, ambition, war,

prostitution, classes, empires, slavery – the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy. – *Mere Christianity*

### **What is the greatest problem in the world?**

‘Some have paid me an undeserved compliment by supposing that my Letters were the ripe fruit of many years’ study in moral and ascetic theology. They forgot that there is an equally reliable, though less creditable, way of learning how temptation works. ‘My heart’ – I need no other’s – ‘showeth me the wickedness of the ungodly.’ – *The Screwtape Letters*

### **What has God done about the evil and suffering in the world?**

‘The central Christian belief is that Christ’s death has somehow put us right with God and given us a fresh start. Theories as to how it did this are another matter. A good many different theories have been held as to how it works; what all Christians are agreed on is that it does work. – *Mere Christianity*

### **Where is true happiness to be found?**

‘To be God – to be like God and to share his goodness in creaturely response – to be miserable – these are the only three alternatives. If we will not learn to eat the only food that the universe grows – then we must starve eternally. – *The Problem of Pain*

### **What is the purpose of ‘good things’ in this world?**

‘I was standing today in the dark toolshed. The sun was shining outside and through the crack at the top of the door there came a sunbeam. From where I stood that beam of light, with the specks of dust floating in it, was the most striking thing in the place. Everything else was almost pitch-black. I was seeing the beam, not seeing things by it. Then I moved, so that the beam fell on my eyes. Instantly the whole previous picture vanished. I saw no toolshed, and (above all) no beam. Instead I saw, framed in the irregular cranny at the top of the door, green leaves moving on the branches of a tree outside and beyond that, 90 odd million miles away, the sun. Looking along the beam, and looking at the beam are very different experiences. ... When you have got into the habit of making this distinction you will find examples of it all day long. ... The girl cries over her broken doll and feels that she has lost a real friend; the psychologist says that her nascent maternal instinct has been temporarily lavished on a bit of shaped and coloured wax. ... As soon as you have grasped this simple distinction, you get one experience of a thing when you look along it and another when you look at it. – *Meditation in a Toolshed*

### **Why don’t the ‘good things’ in this world satisfy?**

‘If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world. - *Mere Christianity*