

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, December 9, 2017

Many agree that C.S. Lewis was one of the most influential writers of the twentieth century. His fantasy series *THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA* continue to captivate children and adults to this day and I imagine these stories will remain popular for centuries to come. In his final novel in the series entitled *THE LAST BATTLE*, Lewis ends the sixteenth chapter with an alluring description of the afterlife.

Let me share the closing lines of that final chapter with you: *“All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.”* The term frequently used for afterlife by the main characters in the Narnia series is *Shadowlands*, which alludes to what lies beyond the veil of this life as we know it. In essence it declares a hope that cannot be described of a future heavenly existence for eternity.

There have been numerous books written on Heaven and supposed first-hand accounts from those who have left their earthly shells for a short time and had some sort of out-of-body experience. And, many theologians have attempted to describe what lies ahead – usually using John’s vivid vision found in the Book of Revelation. Frankly, I like C.S. Lewis’ subtle approach in coining the word *Shadowlands*.

In that final chapter of *THE LAST BATTLE* entitled *Farewell to Shadowlands* we find Lucy and her whole family have been killed in a train crash and they are once more with Aslan as they prepare to enter the Reality of Heaven. Heaven is real, but no one can describe it and I’m certainly not going to make an attempt to do so in these few paragraphs.

Instead, let me reference what the Bible says in two accounts - one in the Book of Acts and the other in Paul’s second letter to the church in Corinth. Let’s first go to Acts 14:19-20 dealing with Paul being left for dead in Lystra by a mob, where we read *“Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city thinking he was dead. But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.”*

Next, let’s turn to 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 where we read *“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know – God knows. And I know that this man – whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows – was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.”*

In verse seven of this same chapter Paul informs us he was given a thorn in the flesh, in order to keep him from boasting of this heavenly experience. In fact, he explains that he was buffeted by a messenger of Satan to keep him from exalting himself afterwards.

Yes, there are mysteries that are meant to remain mysteries until we enter our proverbial *Shadowlands*. C.S. Lewis understood this and frankly I’m satisfied to simply know beyond the shadow of a doubt that paradise awaits those of us who have given control of our life to Christ. We really don’t need to know any details of what awaits us in Paradise other than being certain that there will be no more suffering, no more pain and no more tears. That’s sufficient for me and I trust it works for you as well.

Do you have assurance of your salvation? Are you prepared to enter God’s kingdom or are you unwilling to accept His wonderful gift? As I understand the gospel message, *the good news*, God gives us free will to either accept His plan of salvation or face the consequences of missing out on paradise and an intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father.

All you must do is simply admit your sinful nature, turn away from the sin in your life and ask God to forgive you of your old nature. Christ did the rest on that cross two thousand years ago! Please do join us in *Shadowlands*.

Passages to Ponder: Isaiah 25:6-8; Luke 23:39-43; 2 Corinthians 12:6-9; 2 Peter 3:11-13; Revelation 7:15-17

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Isaiah 25:6-8 New International Version (NIV)

⁶On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare
a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine—
the best of meats and the finest of wines.

⁷On this mountain he will destroy
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;

⁸ he will swallow up death forever.
The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears
from all faces;
he will remove his people's disgrace
from all the earth.

The LORD has spoken.

Luke 23:39-43 New International Version (NIV)

³⁹One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

⁴⁰But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

⁴²Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

⁴³Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

2 Corinthians 12:6-9 New International Version (NIV)

⁶Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, ⁷or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

2 Peter 3:11-13 New International Version (NIV)

¹¹Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹²as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

Revelation 7:15-17 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁵Therefore,
"they are before the throne of God
and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne
will shelter them with his presence.

¹⁶Never again will they hunger;
never again will they thirst.
The sun will not beat down on them,
nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷For the Lamb at the center of the throne
will be their shepherd;
'he will lead them to springs of living water.'
'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'"