



Mere Christianity

Week 3: June 3, 2018

“The Rival Conceptions of God”

And Now...Book 2...

On January 11, 1942 — a little more than five months after giving his first talk — C. S. Lewis was back by popular demand at BBC Headquarters in London. Once again the “On the Air” light flashed, and once again Lewis spoke to the nation.

“They’ve asked me [to give these talks] because I’m a layman and not a parson, and consequently it was thought I might understand the ordinary person’s point of view a bit better,” Lewis told the audience. “Secondly, I think they asked me because it was known that I’d been an atheist for many years and only became a Christian quite fairly recently. They thought that would mean I’d be able to see the difficulties — able to remember what Christianity looks like from the outside.”

Perhaps these two aspects, Lewis claimed, made him better able to explain what Christians believe.¹

This Week

“The Rival Conceptions of God”

Mere Christianity chapters covered:

- Book 2, Chapter 1: “The Rival Conceptions of God”
- Book 2, Chapter 2: “The Invasion”

Further Study

Lewis begins Book 2 with these words: “I have been asked to tell you what Christians believe...”

Question 1: What advantages would being a layman and former atheist have given Lewis?

Question 2: By his own admission, Lewis raises a problem in Book 2, Chapter 2 that is not a simple one: *We exist in a universe that contains much that is indisputably bad and which also contains creatures who know that much of it is bad.* The Christian explanation for these facts is that we live in a “good world that has gone wrong, but still retains the memory of what it ought to have been” (42). “Badness,” Lewis later writes, “is only spoiled goodness. And there must be something good first before it can be spoiled” (44). In your own words, can you restate this point that evil is not an original condition but the perversion of a good condition created by God?

¹ From *Discussing Mere Christianity: Exploring the History, Meaning, and Relevance of C. S. Lewis’ Greatest Book* by Devin Brown (Zondervan, 2015)

Question 3: One of the objections to Christianity is that a 2,000-year-old religion from the distant past can have little or nothing to say to people today. How would you respond to someone who rejected Christian beliefs — including its belief in a fallen angel and a fallen world — based on the claim that these beliefs are out of date?

Question 4: Lewis notes the difference between people who see Nature as an expression of God and those for whom Nature is God (pantheism). How does Psalm 19:1 — “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands” — clarify this distinction? Can you think of other places in the Bible that talk about this topic?

A Look Ahead

June 10, 2018

“Free Will and the Shocking Alternative”

Mere Christianity chapters covered:

- Book 2, Chapter 3: “The Shocking Alternative”
- Book 2, Chapter 4: “The Perfect Penitent”

June 17, 2018

“Christian Behavior and the Great Sin of Pride”

Mere Christianity chapters covered:

- Book 3, Chapter 1: “The Three Parts of Morality”
- Book 3, Chapter 8: “The Great Sin”

June 24, 2018

“The Christian Virtue of Hope”

Mere Christianity chapters covered:

- Book 3, Chapter 10: “Hope”

July 1, 2018

“God In Three Persons”

Mere Christianity chapters covered:

- Book 4, Chapter 1: “Making and Begetting”
- Book 4, Chapter 2: “The Three-Personal God”

July 8, 2018

“Counting the Cost”

Mere Christianity chapters covered:

- Book 4, Chapter 9: “Counting the Cost”
- Book 4, Chapter 10: “Nice People or New Men”

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