

THROUGH THE WARDROBE

Now a major motion picture, "*The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*", written by C.S. Lewis, 55 years ago, is one of the most popular books ever written. Approximately 100 million people have read this classic children's tale, which is credited with leading millions of people to faith in Jesus Christ.

C.S. Lewis is probably one of the most well known, widely read and often-quoted Christian authors of modern times. Between 1931 and 1962, he published 34 books, which included poetry, articles, theology, educational philosophy, children's fairytales, literary criticism, and an autobiography.

In 1947, Time Magazine featured C.S. Lewis on its front cover and described him as "*one of the most influential spokesmen for Christianity in the English speaking world.*" C.S. Lewis has been described as one of the most famous converts to Christianity in the 20th Century. After being a professed Atheist for close on 20 years, C.S. Lewis became one of Christianity's most effective apologists. For 30 years, Lewis was a renowned scholar of Medieval and Renaissance Literature, first at Oxford and later at Cambridge University.

C.S. Lewis asked the right questions, analyzed the answers and transformed these answers into stories that are still changing lives.

It is remarkable, that despite his phenomenal success as an author, Lewis maintained a modest lifestyle throughout his life. Almost all his book earnings went to charity.

Unfortunately, because of the success of the "*Harry Potter*" series, many have assumed that the "*The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*" is something similar. However, while Lewis's "*Chronicles of Narnia*" have a Christian worldview, the "*Harry Potter*" books and films are occultic. C.S. Lewis made clear in his writings that it is wrong to use magic. Magic is forbidden in the Bible (Deuteronomy 18:8-13; Leviticus 19:31; Revelation 21:8). However, in the "*Chronicles of Narnia*," Lewis uses the word "*Magic*" as a synonym for the unchangeable Laws that God has written into the universe. The worlds that C.S. Lewis and J.R.R Tolkien described in their novels were real worlds with real consequences and real hope. Actions have

consequences. When Edmund succumbs to the temptations of the White Witch, he has to pay the consequences, or someone has to pay in his stead.

In contrast, the *"Harry Potter"* books are thoroughly occultic. In their ontology, the world can be manipulated through magic. Things change shape. Nothing is really real. There is no need for a Saviour. One merely has to have the right incantations and formulas to manipulate reality for one's own selfish ends.

While Christians should avoid the occultic *"Harry Potter"* series, both the books and the films; Christians can enthusiastically support *"The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe"* film, and the book on which it is based. Of course, the books in the *"Chronicles of Narnia"* series have far more depth and dialogue, but hopefully the films will inspire a new generation to read the writings of C.S. Lewis including *"Mere Christianity."*

C.S. Lewis explained that: *"The whole Narnia story is about Christ."* *"The Magician's Nephew"* is about the Creation and how evil entered Narnia. *"The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe"* is about the Crucifixion and Resurrection. *"Prince Caspian"* is about the restoration of true religion after corruption. *"The Horse and His Boy"* is about the calling and conversion of a Heathen. *"The Voyage of the Dawn Treader"* is on the spiritual life. *"The Silver Chair"* is on the continuing war against the powers of darkness. And *"The Last Battle"* deals with the coming of the Anti-Christ (The Ape) and the Last Judgment.

C.S. Lewis wrote: *"Let us suppose that there were a land like Narnia, with talking animals, and that it fell into sin, as our world has, and that the Son of God, as He became a man in our world, became a lion there, and then imagine what would happen."*

C.S. Lewis declared: ***"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."***

"The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe" starts with 4 children, Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy, who are sent out of London during the aerial blitz of World War 2. In an old dusty manor home, Lucy, the youngest, discovers a mysterious wardrobe, which leads them all to another world - a land called Narnia. As the wardrobe's fur coats give way to fir trees and the crunch of snow, Lucy is met by the fawn, Tumnus, by the lamppost in the woods.

Narnia is ruled by an evil witch who keeps the realm in a perpetual state of winter - with no hope of spring, or even of Christmas. Narnia is populated by all manner of mythical creatures, and talking animals. Soon the Sons of Adam and Daughters of Eve discover that they have a unique role to play in fulfilling a prophecy that would break the witch's spell and end her reign of terror.

"The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe" has been magnificently brought to screen as a visually inventive realization of Lewis's story. Dr. Ted Baehr of "Movieguide" declared: "The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe is very exciting...Compelling...Superb...Terrific...Magnificent...Excellent. The movie has powerful scenes esteeming sacrifice, forgiveness and redemption... A wonderful movie that tells us the story in an entertaining, thrilling, charming, imaginative and respectful way."

The hero of the film is Aslan, the King of the Beasts and the King of Kings. Aslan is the Creator of Narnia who sang Narnia into being in the first of the Narnia series. Aslan gives his life to pay the death penalty for the human boy, Edmund, who became a traitor, betraying his family and the animals of Narnia.

When the Witch confronts Aslan, she reminds him of the *"deep magic"* the Law that *"every traitor belongs to me as my lawful prey and that for every treachery I have the right to kill."* The Witch declares that by law, his blood belongs to her. All of this echoes Romans 6:23 **"The wages of sin is death."** And Hebrews 9:22 **"Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins."**

Aslan (which is the Turkish word for "Lion") portrays Christ **"The Lion of the tribe of Judah"** Revelation 5:5. Aslan sacrifices himself to save Edmund. **"But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."** Romans 5:8

The Lion dramatizes the war between good and evil, the battle for people's souls, the battle for Biblical Truth.

As C.S. Lewis stated: *"There is no neutrality possible concerning God, the Bible, Truth, Jesus Christ, the nature of being, or good and evil. What should we believe? By what authority? How should we behave? By what standard? Life has meaning. We live in a real world, with real pain and real suffering, a world that needs a real God and real salvation."*

Lewis understood the power of communication. How ideas shape civilization. There is a war raging around us, a spiritual war being fought for the hearts and souls of each human being, and for the culture - civilisation itself. The victory in this war can only be found in Jesus Christ alone. We are more than conquerors through Christ.

Lewis called "*The Chronicles of Narnia*" a "*Supposal*." The Chronicles suppose an alternative universe where the Creator appears in a unique form to save the creatures of that world.

"*The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*" is rich in symbolism. The manor home wherein the 4 children discover the wardrobe is the home of Professor Digory Kirke. The very same Digory who witnessed the creation of Narnia in the "*Magician's Nephew*." The manor of Professor Kirke is symbolic of the church. The neglected wardrobe in the attic symbolizes the Bible through which we discover God's Will. The eldest boy, Peter (later the High King) has a role similar to that of the apostle Peter. Susan and Lucy are much like Mary and Martha, the last at the cross, and the first at the tomb. Additionally, Lucy parallels John, the disciple "whom Jesus loved" one of the most dedicated of Christ's followers. Edmund is analogist to Saul, the persecutor of the first Christians, who became the great missionary Paul.

The gifts given to the children parallel the gifts of the Spirit: Peter is given a shield and a sword symbolizing the Shield of Faith and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:12-18). Peter is called to lead, to fight, to exercise the gift of faith and be courageous in battle. (It should be noted that the characters of the children in the book don't bicker and whine and hesitate to do their duty as the film version depicts them, in ways more appropriate for the 21st Century brats than the 1940's children of C.S. Lewis novel. Nor did they flee their responsibility to own up to breaking a window! That insertion is nowhere in the book!)

Susan obtains a horn to summon help, and a bow and arrows. These symbolise her ministry of prayer, including imprecatory prayer - summoning help and being used of the Lord to defend the righteous against the wicked.

Lucy receives a vial with healing ointment to minister to the wounded.

The first time that Aslan is seen is as he comes out of the pavilion (tent). This symbolizes the Tabernacle of God's presence. The Stone Table on which Aslan is sacrificed represents Moses' Table of the Law. Moses received the Ten Commandments on the top of Mount Sinai, and Aslan willingly surrenders himself for torment, torture and execution at the hands of the Witch and her demons on a hilltop, which is similar to Calvary. Dr. Ted Baehr describes *"The Lion"* as *"The Passion of the Christ"* for children.

In the *"Chronicles,"* creatures with an animal body and human head (like the Centaurs) symbolise reason over passion. These creatures serve Aslan.

The creatures with an animal head and a human body (like the Minotaurs) represent passion over reason. These creatures serve the Witch.

After witnessing Aslan's suffering and death, Susan and Lucy maintain a vigil over his body. As the night darkens, they note that all the stars get fainter *"all except one very big one low down on the eastern horizon."* This refers to Christ as ***"the bright and morning star"*** Revelation 22:16.

At Aslan's resurrection, the Stone Table, on which is written the Law, breaks in two - paralleling the tearing in two of the temple veil (Matthew 27:51).

Aslan explains that the Law provided that *"when a willing victim, who had committed no treachery, was killed in a traitor's stead, the table would crack and death would start working backward."*

The White Witch turns the animals of Narnia into stone: stone-deaf, stone mute. Aslan, however, after rising from the dead, breathes upon these stone statues in Jadis's castle and restores life to those who the Witch had kept frozen with fear. This reflects John 20:22 when Jesus breathes on His disciples to give them His Holy Spirit and empowers them to go out into the world.

And what Aslan does with the stone victims, he does with the seasons. The glorious spring thaw, which Aslan brings to Narnia, is new life, new freedom and new joy. ***"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being***

put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison."

1 Peter 3:18-19

In Ted and James Baehr's "*Narnia Beckons*," it is observed that "*in creating the character of Aslan, Lewis did what no one had ever done before and what (others) thought simply impossible: to present Jesus Christ as a credible and interesting fictional character.... All familiar categories failed to contain him. He took everyone off their guard...He is not safe. But He is good. Aslan is certainly Lewis's supreme literary achievement.*"

C.S. Lewis's book, and to an extent, this film, succeeds in communicating some of the wonder and amazement, fascination and triumph of the Gospel. It is well-worth seeing and supporting. It will bless, edify and uplift you and your family.

It would be wonderful if the other 6 books of the Narnia series were also brought to the big screen in a way that remains faithful to the books. May this film generate greater interest in reading in general, and in "*The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*" in particular. Most importantly, may this be an effective tool for evangelism as we are able to speak to our friends, neighbours and colleagues of the deeper significance and meaning of "*The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*," and the reality of Christ, the devil and the Bible.

"They shall walk after the Lord. He will rule like a lion. When He roars, then His sons shall come trembling from the west." Isaiah 11:10

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