

# Journey through the wardrobe.

## A Christian's guide to NARNIA

By Christina Quick

*I*t comes in chilly, barren December — at a time when the world desperately needs cheering up. When the last brittle leaf has fallen and trees rattle their ice-coated skeletons, we wait with eager anticipation. When every breath hangs suspended in the air and wild creatures undertake a frenzied quest for survival, we peer around the corner like eager children, giddy for its arrival.

Even as winter's icy grip alters the landscape of our existence, we listen hard for silent footsteps in the snow. Can you hear them moving closer? Can you sense the nearness of something — indeed Someone — larger than yourself? The entrance of hope is unmistakable. It fills our hearts and brings us face-to-face with the divine. A flicker of light emerges and a frozen world begins to thaw in the warm glow of Christ's love. At long last it is Christmas.

C.S. Lewis



## A world without Christmas

“Always winter and never Christmas; think of that!” says Mr. Tumnus, the first Narnian character young Lucy meets in C.S. Lewis’ novel *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

Lucy responds as any child would: “How awful!”

Imagine a place in which winter lingers long past its appointed time and Christmas never comes. Few things could be more depressing. That’s the kind of world Lewis introduces in his timeless children’s story, now a major motion picture.

The journey begins when four British siblings — Lucy, Edmund, Susan and Peter Pevensie — enter the strange land of Narnia through a magic wardrobe. What follows is a memorable adventure with a host of unusual characters, from the kindly goat-man Tumnus to a gentle giant named Rumblebuffin.

For many Christians, Narnia

is more than a land of fairy tales. *The Chronicles of Narnia*, a series of seven fantasy novels published between 1950 and 1956, has long been celebrated as classic Christian literature. It has taken its place, as well, among the acknowledged great books of the world.

*Time* magazine recently included Lewis’ work in its list of “100 Best Novels, 1923 to the Present.” Like the other books in the set, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is packed with metaphors that seem to connect with Bible truths and point to Christ.

Now that Lewis’ characters have made it to the big screen, there is a renewed interest in the religious messages behind the stories. Both Christian and secular bookstore shelves are brimming with Narnia-related merchandise, from children’s picture books to Narnia Bible studies and devotional guides.

Narnia’s proximity to Christianity is no accident. Lewis — who was an atheist before accepting Christ as a young man — became a respected

Christian speaker and author, specializing in the area of apologetics. Some of

Lewis’ Christian books include

*Mere*

*Christianity, The Problem of Pain, The Great Divorce and The Screwtape Letters.*

*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Lewis’ most famous work and the first book he penned in the Narnia series, was not written as a strict Christian allegory or religious tale. Many elements, such as the bizarre creatures that inhabit the fantasy world, borrow more from Greek and Roman myths than from Bible stories.

However, Lewis acknowledged that the novel surfaced out of his own relationship with Christ and that it contains numerous scriptural parallels. He is often cited as saying the stories took shape after he imagined what it would be like if Jesus were incarnated in a world different from our own.

“Lewis draws us into another world so that we might experience Christ,” say Kurt Bruner and Jim Ware in their book *Finding God in the Land of Narnia*. “And when we return home from the adventure, we bring with us a better understanding and deeper love for the Savior. Or at the very least, we return having smelled the aroma of joy — and craving its true source.”

Generations of readers have recognized Christ in Lewis’ most moving and

memorable character, the mighty lion Aslan. Now, as moviegoers encounter Narnia this Christmas season, Christians will have a unique springboard for sharing their faith.

You may not feel comfortable launching into a theological discussion with the person standing next to you in the checkout line — the one holding a plush lion and a Narnia coloring book — but perhaps you could talk about the similarities between Jesus and Aslan.

Consider how the following biblical parallels in Lewis’ story might help someone push past the wardrobe and get a glimpse of Christ.

## Good vs. evil

When they enter Narnia, the Pevensie children find themselves in a frozen land ruled by a wicked character, the White Witch. Through her magic spells, she has created a perpetual winter that never includes Christmas.

The Narnians fear the witch, who performs cruel acts such as turning creatures to stone. Yet there are hints that her reign of terror will come to an end. When a character Lewis calls Father Christmas bursts onto the scene, he brings gifts and a message of hope.

“She has kept me out for a long time, but I have got in at last,” he says. “Aslan is on the move. The witch’s magic is weakening.”

The wintry spell is soon broken and the snow begins to melt, revealing a world that is fragrant with new life.

Like the White Witch, Satan may seem to have supreme power in our world. Yet Christmas reminds us that God is on the move. He sent His Son to Earth to rescue us from evil and fill our lives with joy. Satan’s power will soon come to an end. Christ is the ultimate victor.

## Temptation

Because the witch believes the children pose a threat to her power, she tries to gain control of Edmund. Recognizing that he is a rebellious and selfish child, she sees an opportunity to take advantage of his character flaws.

When she offers Edmund anything

he wants to eat, he chooses a confection called Turkish delight. The witch gives him an enchanted serving, and though he dines on it until he is sick, he can’t get enough. Once Edmund has taken the bait, he is willing to do anything for more.

The witch promises to make Edmund a prince and feed him plenty of Turkish delight when he returns to her, but these promises are hollow. Instead, she makes him a slave and gives him only stale bread to eat.

Satan wants to capitalize on our human weaknesses as well. He dangles sin in front of us in all its attractive forms and tries

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# Journey through the wardrobe



to fill our minds with false promises. In the end, those who fall into Satan's trap find themselves spiritually bound and impoverished.

## Redemption

The most obvious Christian concept in Lewis' story is that of redemption. Once Edmund has joined the witch, he finds that he cannot escape her. She claims him as her property and announces her intention to destroy him. At this point, Aslan intervenes and willingly offers himself to be tortured and slain in Edmund's place.

Aslan's death is a poignant reminder of the great sacrifice Jesus made for each of us. Romans 5:8 explains that "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (NIV). Just as Aslan gave his life in exchange for an errant child, Jesus received the punishment for our sins when He died on the cross.

"This is the value of Aslan to me: that I can empathize with him as he offers up himself in exchange for Edmund, and through him, I can un-

derstand Jesus in a whole new way," says Mark Eddy Smith in the book *Aslan's Call: Finding Our Way to Narnia*. "It's so much easier to come at it through the lens of fiction. Wow, Aslan would do that for one bratty little kid, because he loves him. ... I can relate to Edmund. I have betrayed, I have fallen woefully short of everything I was meant to be."

## Triumph of righteousness

The witch, believing she has conquered her powerful foe, is delighted at Aslan's death. However, the great lion surprises her by rising from the dead. In a final battle scene, the witch and her band of wicked warriors are destroyed. Aslan also restores the creatures that the witch had turned to stone.

When all has been made right, Aslan crowns the four children and proclaims them kings and queens. "Once a king or queen in Narnia, always a king or queen. Bear it well, Sons of Adam! Bear it well, Daughters of Eve!" Aslan tells them.

Jesus' resurrection secured the believer's victory over Satan. When Jesus returns to Earth, He will destroy evil completely. Those who have placed their trust in Christ will rule with Him in His eternal kingdom.

That's the hope and joy of Christmas. The Baby who came so long ago is coming again in triumphant power, and His followers will live and reign with Him forever. Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5), is on the move. ■

Christina Quick is staff writer for Today's Pentecostal Evangel.

E-mail your comments to [pe@ag.org](mailto:pe@ag.org).



## ABCs OF SALVATION

To know God and be ready for heaven, follow these steps:

### A. Admit you are a sinner.

"There is no one righteous, not even one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10,23 (See Romans 5:8; 6:23.)

### Ask God's forgiveness.

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13

### B. Believe in Jesus (put your trust in Him) as your only hope of salvation.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (See John 14:6.)

### Become a child of God by receiving Christ.

"To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 (See Revelation 3:20.)

### C. Confess that Jesus is your Lord.

"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9 (See verse 10.)

For further help, contact the Assemblies of God church near you.

If you would like someone to pray with you concerning your decision to follow Jesus Christ, please contact the church indicated on the back cover or call:

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