

## The Chronicles of Narnia | C.S. Lewis

**Reviewed by Max Frazier in the November 2005 Philogian**

The year was 1950. England the rest of the world was still recovering from the devastation of the Second World War. It was a world searching for some hope of peace and assurance. Following its critical vote to grant an independent statehood to Israel, the still adolescent United Nations was now facing a serious crisis in Korea – a crisis that would soon plunge that part of the world into war once again.

That year, a rather unknown professor literature at Oxford University, wrote a story for children that has captured childhood imaginations around the world. The concept for the story began churning in C. S. Lewis' mind after viewing a picture that featured a faun – a mythological creature that was half man and half goat – carrying an umbrella and a pile of packages into a snowy woods. Lewis later recalled, "This picture had been in my mind since I was about sixteen. Then, one day, when I was about forty, I said to myself: 'Let's try to make a story about it'" (The Creation of Narnia by Brian Sibley)

Thus the beginning of The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe, the first in what would become a seven-volume series titled, The Chronicles of Narnia. Other volumes include:

Prince Caspian (published in 1951), The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (1952), The Silver Chair(1953), The Horse and His Boy (1954), The Magician's Nephew (1955 – this is the account of the origins of Narnia, its creation by Aslan and, according to some, should be the first book read), and The Last Battle (1956 – the story of the final days of Narnia). After writing this volume, Lewis was asked to write more, but he knew the story line had come to an end.

Narnia is one of the magical places filled with wonders that dazzle our senses. It is a world where good overcomes evil, although not without a struggle. It is a land of talking beasts, of a brave mouse named Reepicheep, of a delightful Marshwiggle named Puddleglum (one of my favorite characters), and of Tumnus, the faun that inspired the creation of the books. Heroes are children – first, Peter, Susan, Lucy, and Peter – and later – Caspian, Rilian, Eustace and Jill. These children reign as royalty in Narnia, championing the cause of good over evil. Their adventures are many, with lessons that parallel those of real life.

The central character that draws all the stories of Narnia together is Aslan, the great lion. The lion sort of entered the story by accident. Lewis remembered it this way: "Suddenly Aslan came bounding in. I don't know where the Lion came from or why he came. But once he was there, he pulled the whole story together" (The Creation of Narnia by Brian Sibley). Aslan becomes the Christ-figure in the story. In Lewis' mind, if a world did exist like Narnia, he believed that God would enter into that world like a lion.

There are many editions of The Chronicles of Narnia. Focus on the Family Radio Theater has done a wonderful job of putting life into the stories using radio drama as the format. These CDs will keep your attention as you listen to the characters of Narnia come alive. And, this December, Walt Disney Pictures will introduce us to the first full-length feature film of The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe. It will be interesting to see if these films generate the interest as did those of The Lord of the Rings, a series of books written by C. S. Lewis' dearest friend, J.R.R. Tolkien.

Don't know what to get your children or grandchildren for Christmas? You could not go wrong with introducing them to The Chronicles of Narnia. Better yet, read them together as a family, then discuss the Christian principles that are woven into the

very fabric of the stories. It would be a great way to cultivate Christian principles into the lives of young minds and lives. Besides, you also will enjoy the books. At least I have – so many times!