

# Lewis and Tolkien

The Truth, The Myth and the  
Inklings



We all need to escape sometimes, because life is hard. Many of us enjoy fantasy books or films, because they provide a great escape from the difficulties of the real world.

How many hours have you spent in Narnia or Middle-earth? Fantasy aficionados owe a debt of gratitude to Lewis and Tolkien for creating these worlds for us that have inspired so much of modern fantasy. But did you know that if it wasn't for their friendship, we would be bereft of both these works?

## **Tolkien's Private Hobby**

Tolkien's first recorded Middle-earth writing can be dated to September 1914, and he had written much of his legendarium by the time he met C.S. Lewis at Oxford in 1926. Despite poor first impressions, they quickly struck up a friendship involving long conversations about their mutual interest in mythology.

In 1933, they helped form 'The Inklings', a group of friends at Oxford who met to read and critique each other's written works. It is only because of this friendship between Lewis and Tolkien, that Tolkien decided to try and have 'The Hobbit' published.

As Tolkien puts it:

**"The unpayable debt that I owe to [Lewis] was not 'influence' as it is normally understood, but sheer encouragement. He was for long my only audience. Only from him did I ever get the idea that my 'stuff' could be more than a private hobby."**

'The Hobbit' was so successful that the publishers demanded a sequel, 'The Lord of the Rings', which cemented Tolkien as the father of modern fantasy.

## **C.S. Lewis: A Sceptical Friend**

Whatever debt we owe Lewis for encouraging Tolkien, Lewis owed Tolkien a greater debt.

Lewis was an atheist when they first met, having fallen away from Christianity during his adolescence. But amongst all of their mythological conversation, they persisted in discussing the Christian religion.

Tolkien was convinced that the reason that human beings created mythologies was because humans themselves were created by God:

**"We have come from God, and inevitably the myths woven by us, though they contain error, will also reflect a splintered fragment of the true light, the eternal truth that is with God. Indeed, only by myth-making, only by becoming 'sub-creator' and inventing stories, can Man aspire to the state of perfection that he knew before the Fall." (J.R.R. Tolkien)**

And he impressed this idea upon Lewis, alongside the idea that the Bible contains the one "true myth". A "true myth" might sound like an oxymoron, but Tolkien is thinking of a myth as a story that explains the meaning behind the world we live in.

Tolkien believed that most myths contain some truths and some falsehoods. But the Bible, particularly the story of Jesus, was the one myth that was self-evidently true.

After one especially long conversation with Tolkien, on a motorbike ride to the zoo, Lewis began to believe that the story was true; Jesus was the Son of God.

Lewis described his new viewpoint like this:

**"Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference that it really happened: and one must be content to accept it in the same way, remembering that it is God's myth, where the others are men's myth: i.e. the Pagan stories are God expressing Himself through the minds of poets, using such images as He found there, while Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call "real things." (C.S. Lewis)**

And it was this newfound faith that led to the writing of 'The Chronicles of Narnia'.

## The True Myth

Tolkien and Lewis were friends that disagreed on many things, but agreed on one thing - that the stories about Jesus in the Bible were true!

Here is the short version of the greatest mythology ever told, from which all other stories come:

**That God became a man, Jesus. That Jesus came to die, to take away the punishment that we deserved for our sins; all the ways in which we have rebelled against God. That he was raised from the dead, and is ruling as King in heaven. And that you can avoid death and judgement, and spend an eternity in heaven, if you would turn from your wrongdoing, and ask Jesus to rescue you.**

That is the most wonderful story of all, that all you have to do is receive the forgiveness of God is to place your trust in Jesus.

The Bible says:

**"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)

You can join Lewis and Tolkien, and many other Christians, in believing in the one true myth. You can speak to Jesus now out loud, or in your head, and He will hear you supernaturally, and will become the greatest friend you've ever known.

Christians still enjoy fantasy novels, but we find our greatest joy in the reality of the story that we are a part of through Jesus, and know that our great escape is coming, where we get to go to a place in Heaven more wonderful than Narnia, or Middle-earth.

Will you join us on the greatest adventure in all of history?

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If you would like someone to pray with on the phone, or a copy of the Bible, please call **07915235975** or email **alex@peelstreet.org.uk**