

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

in *PRINCE CASPIAN* by C.S. Lewis

Providence and Provision: Faith to Follow Aslan

by Mark Pike



Justice and Freedom

One of the major themes in *Prince Caspian* is the restoration of rightful rule and eradicating corruption. When Aslan ruled Old Narnia, there was justice and freedom. Under Miraz, the Old Narnians are persecuted for believing in Aslan and even talking about him.

Evil men do not understand justice, But those who seek the Lord understand all. (Proverbs 28:5)

So, without Aslan's rule everybody suffers, evil increases, and dictators like Miraz take over. Where in the world today are Christians persecuted? Why? How?

There are five major Christian themes in *Prince Caspian*:

1. The conflict between good and evil
2. God's providence or provision
3. Faith (Lucy can see Aslan because she believes in him.)
4. Discipleship – being faithful followers of Aslan
5. The presence and the work of Aslan (Christ) in the world.

The moral vision of *Prince Caspian* is clear. There are virtues that are approved of and vices which are disapproved of. The vices are shown by Miraz and his followers and the virtues are shown by Caspian and his followers. We see a lot of personal courage and self-sacrifice in this novel.

The Conflict between Good and Evil

The struggle between the forces of good and evil portrayed in *Prince Caspian* mirrors the ever-present biblical conflict between good and evil.

Aslan, a Christ-like figure, triumphs over the evil Miraz and his followers, and this triumph is possible because of the sovereignty gained as a result of his sacrificial death on the stone table in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

The characters in the book need to make a personal choice as to whether their allegiance lies with Aslan or Miraz. Who will they follow?

Providence

Aslan's guidance of the children and Trumpkin on their journey through Narnia has the hallmarks of Providence in guiding people and affairs to bring to fruition God's plans for the world.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on our own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Lucy sees Aslan and wants to follow him but the others do not believe her. As a result, they follow the wrong path and have to retrace their steps when they come under attack from Miraz's followers. They realize that Lucy was right.

Once they see Aslan and accept his guidance they complete the journey with his help.

Like all Providential guidance, it has to be willingly accepted by the recipients. When Lucy's siblings refuse to accept that she has seen Aslan and that they should follow him, their journey goes terribly wrong. Once they accept that she is right, they are able to receive Aslan's help.

Faith

Under Miraz's rule, the stories of 'Old Narnia' have been suppressed and with them belief in Aslan, the

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Great Lion. However, there are a number of characters who have quietly continued to remember Aslan and have faith in him, such as the old woman who is rewarded for her enduring faith when she finally meets Aslan at the end of the novel.

He (Abraham) did not waver at the praise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God. (Romans 4:20)

The emphasis on faith in Aslan mirrors the importance placed on faith in Christ in Christian teaching. Faith is not only portrayed as belief in the existence of Aslan, but in his care for the people of Narnia.

All four Pevensie children know that Aslan exists because they met him on their previous visit to Narnia. In *Prince Caspian*, however, initially only Lucy sees him, perhaps because she is the only one who believes that he will help them.

Once the others have acknowledged that Lucy was right and that they need to follow Aslan, one by one they see him for themselves. Trumpkin gradually comes to believe in Aslan having been previously sceptical, mirroring the experience of those who slowly come to accept the Christian faith, including Lewis himself.

Discipleship

Discipleship, as personal allegiance to Christ no matter what others do or say, is echoed in *Prince Caspian*, particularly in Lucy's relationship with Aslan. In Chapter 10 she demonstrates her devotion to him when they are reunited by hugging and kissing him joyfully. She is ready to follow him alone if she cannot persuade the others to join her. (Aslan expressed his disappointment that she chose to stay with the rest of the party after seeing him for the first time.)

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him (John 14:21)

The Christian concept of one's knowledge of Christ growing over time through discipleship is referred to when Lucy thinks that Aslan is larger than before. Aslan attributes this to the fact that it is Lucy who has 'grown'; i.e., she now understands that Aslan is greater than she initially believed.

The Presence and Work of Aslan (Christ) in the World

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, there are clear parallels between elements of the story and the death and resurrection of Christ.

In *Prince Caspian*, the parallels are evident more in the fact that aspects of Aslan's person and actions clearly echo those of Christ, than in the story itself. He

is held in reverence, for example, when Peter kneels to him and when Peter and Lucy recognise him as their true judge and repent of their shortcomings. He is omniscient, guiding the children and Trumpkin to reach their destination.

At the end of the novel, releasing the people of Narnia from their enslavement under Miraz, he performs miracles, such as healing a sick old woman' ■

Special Acknowledgement: This short guide for teachers and readers draws extensively on Chapter 17, 'The Christian Vision of Prince Caspian', in Ryken and Mead's excellent *A Reader's Guide to Prince Caspian*.

Further Reading

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Ryken, L. & Lamp Mead, M. (2009) *A Reader's Guide to Prince Caspian : A Journey into C.S. Lewis' Narnia* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press).

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