

## The Deeper Magic

Good Friday 2019

In C.S. Lewis' wonderful children's story *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* the reader is introduced to the Magic and Deeper Magic of Narnia.

The Deep Magic was a set of laws placed into Narnia by the Emperor-beyond-the-Sea at the time of its creation. It was written on the Stone Table. This law stated that the White Witch, Jadis, she is a nasty piece of work by the way, was entitled to kill every traitor, and if someone denied her this right then all of Narnia would be overturned and perish in fire and water.

The story's traitor is the boy Edmund who comes into Narnia with his brother Peter and sisters, Susan and Lucy from England. The Witch Jadis seduces Edmund to turn on his siblings by giving him enchanted Turkish Delight. However as the story develops Edmund turns on Jadis and is then deemed a traitor whose life is now forfeit.

Enter Aslan the Great Lion. Unknown to Jadis, a deeper magic from before the dawn of Time existed, which said that if a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Stone Table would crack, and Death would start working backwards. Aslan used this ancient law to save Edmund's life by offering up his own life for the boy's.

It was on the Stone Table that Aslan was sacrificed. But then, wonderfully after he has been brutally killed by the wicked Jadis, he is Resurrected, the Stone Table of Sacrifice is cracked and Aslan goes on to defeat the White Witch and her minions.

I want to speak to you briefly about the deeper magic of the Passion and Resurrection. During Lent we have been considering the ignominy of the Cross as the Lord spoke the Seven Last Words from that cruel instrument of torture. The Cross was so common in the world of Jesus' time and had been for centuries, having been devised as a form of capital punishment by the Persians. The Romans adopted it as a form of execution around the time of Jesus' birth. Everywhere were crosses that declared this is what happens to traitors of Rome.

Indeed we read of two people in the Acts of the Apostles who claimed to be the Jewish Messiah. The Pharisee named Gamaliel, whose most famous student was Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul the Apostle, speaks of the deeper magic when he councils the Sanhedrin to be careful in their treatment of Peter and John:

***“Men of Israel, take care what you do with these men. 36 For before these days Theudas arose, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he was slain and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. 37 After him Judas the Galilean arose in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered. 38 So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail; 39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!”***

Theudas and Judas had gathered around them a significant number of followers and both suffered deaths, perhaps by crucifixion. With their demise their followers also whittled away. Like Theudas and Judas, Jesus had a coterie of disciples. If his death had been the end of him, we would not be here this afternoon. What was the difference between Jesus and Theudas and Judas? It was the deeper magic formed by God before the dawn of time. With the death of Jesus, and his resurrection we come into contact with this deeper magic.

The deep magic of the crucifixion was visible to all of Jesus enemies, all of those for whom he prayed in the first word, “Father Forgive Them”. However his Resurrection appearances were not made in the presence of his enemies but only to those who with the Second word had become his friends “Today you will be with me in Paradise” and the Third Word from the Cross “Woman Behold Your Son, Son behold your Mother”, had become members of his family.

Therefore we can see that the Crucifixion was public but the Resurrection appearances were private. Jesus left it to those who first witnessed this deeper magic of the Resurrection to pass on the greatest news the world has ever known. Death and evil are swallowed up and Jesus’ Resurrection declares the Victory of God over every enemy of mercy, grace and forgiveness.

Without the Cross we would not be forgiven, made Jesus’ friends and welcomed into the family. Without the Resurrection we would not know the effects of the Crucifixion – for if death had been the end for Jesus our faith would be futile and we would still be in our sins ( 1 Corinthians 15:17).

But death was not the end. Christ has been raised from the dead. What is the implication for this deeper magic for us? It means that our life in the present has meaning because we belong to Jesus. It means that at our death we can also pray with trusting confidence:

**Father it is finished and into your hands I commend my Spirit.**

There is a deeper magic, says Aslan, whereby death starts to work backwards. This is our story, this is our faith. Thanks be to Jesus for his Death. Thanks be to God the Father for Jesus’ Resurrection. Thanks be to the Holy Spirit who imparts this story to us so that we can grow in the virtues of faith, hope and love as we continue our earthly pilgrimage through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Because of this deeper magic we know God is preparing that place in heaven where we will, if we persevere to the end, dwell with him forever.