

¶¶ for Parents

November 14, 2005

A Travel Guide for Narnia

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1 Corinthians 2:9

For those of you who may have missed our C.S. Lewis Day a couple of weeks ago, I thought I would share some further comments about *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

For purists such as Pastor Allen Cooney and myself, it is with some trepidation that we anticipate the release of the new motion picture, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. We are anxious lest the filmmakers alter the original plot. We are skeptical that any film can evoke the imagery of Lewis language in written form. We are reluctant to have a filmmaker define once and for all what Narnia looks like (since each of us already has an ideal Narnia pictured in our own imaginations). We worried that the characters will be portrayed as one-dimensional, and not as the wonderfully complex beings we have come to know and love: Peter, who is both doubtful and trusting; Susan, who is both “grown up” and childish at the same time; and Edmund – well, he’s a complex study if there ever was one!

We are also concerned about the plethora of commercial spin-offs that will inevitably follow (or precede) the release of the film: video games, board games, action figures, etc. None of these things are evil, but they tend to threaten the “magic” that needs to happen in your own child’s mind. I will never forget my disappointment when I saw Aslan in the BBC version of these books. “Why, he’s just a big stuffed animal!” I thought - not at all like the “not a tame lion” Lewis so masterfully depicts.

By no means am I saying to deprive your child of the privilege of seeing this film. If they are the readers that Cornerstone is attempting to form them into, they will realize themselves that the

film experience is not the same as reading the book. One of our legendary “Cornerstone moment stories” recounts how Alex LaMear once said, coming out of a movie with his parents, “That was an okay movie, but I don’t think it would have made a very good book.”

I am also not as concerned about the ratings as many parents will be. I find that many children are exposed to much more horrific stuff on television than will probably be depicted in the “demons and ogres” scene after Aslan has died. However, this is entirely up to each family’s discretion.

In closing, please keep one more thing in mind. Whether in reference to the story as depicted in the film or in the book itself, please avoid the temptation to “over-interpret” the meanings to your child. Lewis stressed repeatedly that this is not an allegory. While the parallels to Biblical events and the Christian life are certainly evident, it is very important that the child be left to discover these on his own. They will mean much more and make a more lasting impression that way.

Above all, don’t let any moralizing take away from the true enjoyment of this tale. Lewis intended these stories to be rip-roaring entertainment. That they reflect eternal truths is unavoidable since Lewis worked from the framework of a Christian mind. And they will be unavoidable to any Christian who sees or reads them as well. Lewis opens up new worlds for our imaginations to remind us that we only know in part now, but some day we shall see face to face.