

# The temptation of the garden: good, evil, and aslan in the magician's nephew



During his life, C. S. Lewis writes a collection of seven novels that he publishes into his well-known Chronicles of Narnia series, which sheds light on Narnia's history. These novels introduce similar themes with the first book in the series named, *The Magician's Nephew*. Most importantly, we learn how Aslan, the Lion who can be seen as a symbol of Jesus created the world but also how evil first entered into Narnia because of two children. A clear theme C. S. Lewis introduced in *The Magician's Nephew* is the parallel to the original sin and temptation presented in the Book of Genesis by Adam and Eve with the temptation of the snake. This is a parallel to the story of Adam and Eve but this story differs slightly. Digory does not give into the temptation of disobeying the rules of the Garden, but he does give into the temptation of ringing the bell that awakens Jadis which is his first mistake. Digory learns from his mistakes and figures out the difference between right and wrong after being lectured to by Aslan. He wants to make amends for his earlier mistakes so he does not feed into the wrong temptations once again.

Looking closely at *The Magician's Nephew*, we see the influence Aslan has in Digory and Polly's lives and in turn this influence is what compels them to want to undo the harm they have already caused in their own world.

In *The Magician's Nephew*, we learn about Digory and Polly's initial mistake to awaken Jadis, the Witch who has been in a deep slumber. The only way she would be woken up is if someone was to ring a mysterious bell and the curiosity of the two children would change their lives forever. They thought it would be fine to ring the bell but the narrator speaks on the children's blunder by saying, " And both thought it was; but they had never been more mistaken in their lives" (Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*, 37). They thought

ringing the bell would have no effect but little did they know that Queen Jadis was awakened and ready to wreak havoc. Apparently, the bell simply symbolizes the start of chaos in the novel because before the bell was rung, everything was peaceful. Along with the bell symbolizing this significant change, I also believe this foreshadows the trouble the character of Jadis will bring to everyone she encounters. But what's truly interesting is that, Polly and Digory have differing opinions on the Queen. Polly states that, " This is a terrible woman" (Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*, 39). While, Digory exclaims, " She's wonderfully brave. And strong. She's what I call a Queen! I do hope she's going to tell us the story of this place" (Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*, 39). Initially, the two children have two opposing impressions of Jadis. The only reason that Digory is mesmerized by Queen Jadis is because he's a boy and this may be the first time he's ever seen a woman with such power so he instantly develops a crush. Polly on the other hand, sees right through Jadis and knows that her introduction smells trouble for everyone. Digory is clearly startled when Jadis reveals her interest in going back to Earth and when the dust settles, he can infer that if she does come back to Earth, things will be turned upside-down. Digory and Polly seem to finally realize their mistakes once they witness the creation of Narnia by Aslan. (Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*, 79). Once Digory realizes the severity of his " Son of Adam" namer, he knows he has potentially destroyed Aslan's creation and like Adam in the Bible, Digory's initial curiosity is what is going to bring turmoil to Narnia. Altogether, with the introduction of Aslan, Digory and Polly know their curiosity has brought evil amongst the inhabitants of Narnia and the only way to undo the wrong, is to follow and abide by the teachings of the Great Aslan.

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By the later stages of the novel, Aslan knows the grief Digory is dealing with and tasks him with one simple mission. This mission represents a change in direction for Digory in that, he realizes his boyish wonders put many people in danger earlier but now he wants to make a change, for the better. If successful, this mission would protect Narnia for years to come and also heal Digory's ailing mother; however, this is where temptation arises once again. When he initially smells the forbidden fruit, the narrator states, "A terrible thirst and hunger came over him and a longing to taste that fruit" (Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*, 92). So it's definitely possible that if Digory didn't have the guidance of Aslan he would have disobeyed the sacred rule of the tree. The question arises, why doesn't Digory eat the Apple? Perhaps it is because he feels like he is under some sort of surveillance. It could also be the simple fact that he can't go against the Tao or natural law according to the narrator, "Things like Do Not Steal were, I think, hammered into boys' heads a good deal harder in those days than they are now. Still we can never be certain" (Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*, 92). Digory's values seem to finally take over when he thinks of the possible consequences of eating the forbidden fruit. He sets his sights on returning the fruit to Aslan, but as expected, Queen Jadis appears once again. C. S. Lewis makes this stage the turning point of the novel, because we as the audience know how easily Digory gave into his temptations earlier in the novel and he is thus challenged once more by a greater power to see if he will give in once again. To further tempt Digory, the Queen states, "Think of me, Boy, when you lie old and weak and dying, and remember how you threw away the chance of endless youth! It won't be offered you again" (Lewis, *The Magician's*

Nephew, 95). However, Digory has learned from his earlier mistakes and does not give into the witches' claims of everlasting life. He proves he's not the selfish boy he once was by considering and letting Aslan have a direct influence on his activity. For his loyalty, Digory is thus rewarded. Once Aslan receives the apple from Digory, he reveals the drawbacks that stealing one would have. According to the folklore, a "stolen apple" would heal but it would not bring desirable "joy" for the thief and whoever consumed it. (Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*, 100-101). Thus, Digory receives the apple as a gift from Aslan's hands which in turn, restores his mother's health and allows him to live happily ever after. In my eyes, Digory receives the apple as a gift once Aslan knows that he can trust Digory. Aslan wants to spread his beneficence to his people and with Digory proving himself, he gives Digory the one thing he has been longing for since the beginning of the novel. It's clear without the influence of Aslan on Digory's life, he may have eaten the forbidden fruit and joined sides with the evil Queen Jadis. Digory knew the right thing to do in the situation when the Witch attempted to sway him and for his support and trust in Aslan, he was rewarded with everything he wanted in the form of a gift. When one has the right guidance, you reap the benefits of following the right path. With the introduction of Aslan, Digory acquires a "Role Model" of sorts seeing that he looks up to Aslan and aims to abide by his morals.

One of C. S. Lewis' well-known fiction works, *The Magician's Nephew* draws a familiar parallel when comparing Digory and Polly from the novel and Adam and Eve from the Book of Genesis. In the beginning of the novel, Digory Kirke is just a foolish young boy who is curious for the next adventure and doesn't

think much of his actions. He slips up and brings evil into Narnia and it seems that chaos and havoc are imminent after his mistake. But eventually, his character finally develops into someone with a goal once he becomes familiar with Aslan. Digory is faced with two parallels during this novel. One being he can follow the right way to live which is depicted by Aslan or he can succumb to all of his temptations and be influenced by Queen Jadis. He seems to refuse her power because he has learned that when he gives into his own temptations, he does not make the best decisions. Due to the great Aslan's guidance, Digory's character makes an immense amount of personal growth and the land of Narnia is protected for the foreseeable future. Ultimately, all of C. S. Lewis' works possess a sense of overlay and this novel seems to correlate in part with the story of the original sin & temptation in the Book Genesis which is then introduced in the magical land of Narnia.