

The Worlds of Lewis and Tolkien: Christian Imagery in Narnia and Middle Earth

#4: Images of Christ in Lord of the Rings

Introduction:

- Does the LOTR Have a Christ Figure?
- Three “Offices” of Leadership in the OT

I. Christ as Prophet: Gandalf

A. Understanding the Biblical Role of Prophet

- Prophets spoke wisdom and truth
- Prophets performed miracles and wonders
- Prophets offered prophecies about the future
- How does Christ fulfill the role of prophet?

B. In What Ways Is Gandalf a Prophet?

- He brings wisdom/advice/counsel. His greatest weapon is truth.
 - All look to Gandalf for advice/guidance. Known as Gandalf “stormcrow”
 - After his fall in Moria, the Fellowship lacks direction. Aragorn: “I cannot advise you. I am not Gandalf, and though I have tried to bear his part, I do not know what design or hope he had for this hour” (FOTR, 387)
 - Gandalf also explains complex truths, history, and the lore of the rings (think of his role at the Council of Elrond, or his journey with Pippin to Minas Tirith)
 - Like other prophets, Gandalf’s advice is often rejected: Denethor: “Some of accused you of delighting to bear ill news” (ROTK, 801)
- He foresees future events
 - “My heart tells me that [Gollum] has some part to play yet, for good or ill, before the end” (FOTR, 58).
 - Treebeard: “[Wizards] are always troubled about the future” (TT, 461).
- He performs great acts of power to deliver and save. Examples?

C. Sidebar: Gandalf’s “Resurrection”

- In what ways does Gandalf’s resurrection resemble Christ’s?

II. Christ as Priest: Frodo

A. Understanding the Biblical Role of Priest

- Priests were descendants of Aaron, called to work in the tabernacle/temple
- Purpose was to represent the people before God as a *mediator*
- Primary activity was to offer sacrifices for sins
- How does Jesus fulfill the role of priest?

B. In What Ways is Frodo a Priest?

- He demonstrates the power of weakness, humility and suffering
 - Hobbits are small and quiet and easily overlooked
 - 1 Cor 1:27: "God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong."
- He bears a great burden, the Ring, which represents sin
 - Frodo is known as the "ringbearer"
 - Aragorn: "He is the Bearer and the fate of the Burden is on him" (FOTR, 394)
 - The weight of the ring grows heavier, the closer Frodo gets to Mordor. Frodo: "It's heavy on me, Sam lad, very heavy. I wonder how far I can carry it?" (TT, 690)
- He voluntarily sacrifices his life for the Shire and all Middle Earth
 - Frodo: "I will take the ring though I do not know the way" (FOTR, 264)
 - Frodo: "I have been too deeply hurt. I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me. It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger: someone has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them" (ROTK, 1006).
 - "The Lord of the Rings reverses our expectations by taking us on a quest, not to gain something, but to give it up" (Phil Ryken, *Messiah Comes to Middle Earth*, 63)
- He is betrayed by someone in his inner circle (Boromir, Gollum)

III. Christ as King: Aragorn

A. Understanding the Biblical Role of King

- God appointed Kings to rule his people Israel
- Their primary job was to protect God's people by *fighting* for them
- They also *cared* for God's people: food, shelter, healing
- How does Christ fulfill the role of king?

B. In What Ways is Aragorn a Christ-Like King?

- His coming was the fulfillment of prophecy
 - "All that is gold does not glitter, not all who wander are lost,
The old that is strong does not wither, Deep roots are not reached by the frost,
From the ashes a fire shall be woken, a light from the shadows will spring,
Renewed shall be the blade that was broken, the crownless again shall be king"
- At points his kingly identity is hidden and questioned
 - After seeing Aragorn at Bree, Frodo says, "I think a servant of the enemy would look fairer and feel fouler."
 - Boromir and Denethor doubt and question his claim to the throne
 - Where do we see glimpses of Aragorn's kingly identity before he officially takes the throne?
- He was a great and mighty warrior
- He is a great caretaker and healer (Houses of Healing)
- He journeys to the realm of the Dead (The Paths of the Dead)
- He has a great and grand Royal Wedding
- He has many names. Can you think of examples?