

## Start

FREUD

You were speaking of your "Inkling" and your Atheist.

LEWIS

Tolkien and Weldon; yes. Weldon is a well respected Professor of Classical Studies. He's also a complete cynic and the most bitter man I've ever met.

FREUD

So far I like him.

LEWIS

I had him in for a drink one evening and the subject of the Gospels came up. I nearly fell out of my chair when this man said there was strong evidence supporting the historical authenticity of the New Testament. "It looks as if it really happened", he told me.

FREUD

How much were you drinking?

LEWIS

Not enough. When I told him how shocked I was to hear him say such a thing, he couldn't have been more embarrassed and eager to leave. Afterwards I couldn't stop thinking about it. If the most militant atheist I knew believed the Gospels to be true, was there no escape?

FREUD

You can't be saying the Gospels are literal. These are myths and legends.

LEWIS

But does that make them lies? A few weeks later Tolkien opened my eyes to a different perspective.

FREUD

This man who writes "Fantasies".

LEWIS

Yes. We took a stroll after dinner one evening. We were on Addison's Walk, it's a path on campus under magnificent Beech Trees... Ah...we're back to the forest, I see.

FREUD

It seems the couch did you good.

LEWIS

(Smiles) Yes. We were discussing myths. I told Tolkien I enjoyed them artistically, but basically I regarded them as fiction, as lies, as you do.

Tolkien stopped me. He said, "You're wrong. They're far from lies. They're man's way of expressing truths that would otherwise go unspoken. They hint at the life God made for us." He told me to look closely at my reaction to them.

He said, "When you read myths about Gods coming to earth and sacrificing themselves, their stories move you. As long as you read them anywhere but the Bible. The story of Christ is the greatest myth at the heart of human history."

He said Pagan myths were born through God expressing himself through the poets. But the myth of Christ is God expressing Himself through Himself. What sets it apart is that Christ actually walked the earth among us. His dying transformed myth into truth and transforms the lives of all who believe in him.

And that's your choice, he told me: to believe or disbelieve.

FREUD

So you shouted "I believe!" and the birds in the trees cried 'Halleluiah'.

LEWIS

Not quite. The choice I made was to go back and examine the evidence. That night I went home and began to re-read the New Testament. Critically. And as a literary historian, I'm perfectly convinced that whatever the Gospels are they aren't myths. They aren't artistic enough. From an imaginative point of view they're clumsy, they don't work. Most of the life of Jesus is left totally unknown to us, and writers building a legend wouldn't allow that to happen.

FREUD

You are convinced of Christ's existence because of bad storytelling.

LEWIS

Christ's existence isn't in doubt, only who he was. The man was chronicled by His contemporaries, Roman and Jewish Historians. Even H.G. Wells, whose skepticism rivaled my own, admitted 'Here was a man. This part of the tale could not have been invented.'

FREUD

That Christ was a man I don't argue. The same as Mohammed or Buddha, who also deluded themselves into believing they were more than that.

LEWIS

But Christ isn't the same. If you had gone up to Buddha and asked him 'Are you the son of Brahma?' he would have said, 'You are in the vale of illusion'. If you asked Mohammed 'Are you Allah?' he would have thought you daft and cut your head off. Only Christ made the appalling claim to be the Messiah. He also claimed the power to forgive sins; how absurd is that?

FREUD

I'm convinced. Christ was a lunatic.

Stop

LEWIS

That was my first option.

FREUD

It's more than an option, it's a likelihood. Why should I take Christ's claim to be God more seriously than the dozen patients I've treated who claim to be Christ?

LEWIS

Did you find a single person whose concept of reality was otherwise sound?

FREUD

(Pause) No.

LEWIS

So let's put aside the possibility that Christ was delusional for the moment. The second alternative is that He was consciously deceiving his followers for some other purpose.