

Discussion Guide

Perelandra, chs 13–17



OPEN

“We know these things now,” said the King, seeing Ransom’s hesitation. “All this, all that happened in your world, Maleldil has put into our mind. We have learned of evil, though not as the Evil One wished us to learn. We have learned better than that, and know it more, for it is waking that understands sleep and not sleep that understands waking. There is an ignorance of evil that comes from being young: there is a darker ignorance that comes from doing it, as men by sleeping lose the knowledge of sleep. You are more ignorant of evil in Thulcandra now than in the days before your Lord and Lady began to do it. But Maleldil has brought us out of the one ignorance, and we have not entered the other. It was by the Evil One himself that he brought us out of the first. Little did that dark mind know the errand on which he really came to Perelandra!”

- *King Tor to Ransom*, ch. 17, p. 179



ENTRY

1. When have you experienced something that was meant for evil turning into an unexpected goodness in the providence of God?



RECALL

1. Describe the nature of Ransom’s conversation with Weston as they are riding on the fish. Is Weston repentant? *ch 13*
2. How does the Un-man come to his end? How does Ransom ultimately understand the difference between Weston and the evil spirit who has possessed him? *ch 14*
3. What is the role of the Oyarsa of Malacandra and Perelandra at the end of this story? How do they now relate to King Tor and Queen Tinidril? *chs 16–17*
4. What decision did the King have to make during his own trial while his wife was being tested? *ch 17*



ANALYSIS

1. How does Ransom ultimately resist the spiritual and physical warfare of the evil spirits? How do his questions and responses to Weston and the Un-man reveal his faith and trust in God? *chs 13–14*
2. How does the revealing of Malacandra and Perelandra as Mars and Venus (Ares and Aphrodite) help Ransom understand their role in terrestrial mythology? *ch 16*
3. How is it that Tor and Tinidril have come to understand the nature of evil without having ever tasted it? What does their triumph communicate to Ransom about the nature of choice and obedience? *ch 17*
4. What does Ransom learn about the continuing role that Malacandra and Perelandra will play in the “last things” on Thulcandra? Why does King Tor say that these are only the events “before the beginning”? *ch 17*



DIVING DEEPER

But after that He showed me in a darkness what was happening to the Queen. And I knew it was possible for her to be undone. And then I saw what had happened in your world, and how your Mother fell and how your Father went with her, doing her no good thereby and bringing the darkness upon all their children. And then it was before me like a thing coming towards my hand ... what I should do in like case. There I learned of evil and good, of anguish and joy.”

Ransom had expected the King to relate his decision, but when the King’s voice died away into thoughtful silence he had not the assurance to question him.

“Yes...” said the King, musing. “Though a man were to be torn in two halves ... though half of him turned into earth... The living half must still follow Maleldil. For if it also lay down and became earth, what hope would there be for the whole? But while one half lived, through it He might send life back into the other.” Here he paused for a long time, and then spoke again somewhat quickly. “He gave me no assurance. No fixed land. Always one must throw oneself into the wave.”

- *King Tor to Ransom*, ch 17, pp. 180–181



REFLECTION

1. How does the joy of Perelandra at handing over her authority to the King and Queen help you imagine the proper role of authority and stewardship?

“I am Perelandra,” said the other voice.

“I do not understand,” said Ransom. “The Woman told me there were no eldila in this world.”

“They have not seen my face till to-day,” said the second voice, “except as they see it in the water and the roof-heaven, the islands, the caves, and the trees. I was not set to rule them, but while they were young I ruled all else. I rounded this ball when it first arose from Arbol. I spun the air about it and wove the roof. I built the Fixed Island and this, the holy mountain, as Maleldil taught me. The beasts that sing and the beasts that fly and all that swims on my breast and all that creeps and tunnels within me down to the centre has been mine. And to-day all this is taken from me. Blessed be He.”

“The small one will not understand you,” said the Lord of Malacandra. “He will think that this is a grievous thing in your eyes.”

- *Perelandra and Malacandra to Ransom*, ch 17, p. 168

2. How does the vision of masculinity and femininity that Lewis portrays in Perelandra confirm or contradict your own understanding?
3. How does the role of human beings as being both spiritual and embodied make up a significant theme in Perelandra? Does this seem to challenge prevailing notions of what it means to be human?