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**SILMARILLION SUMMER**  
2022 READ-ALONG



Silmarillion Summer: A Five-Part Overview of *The Silmarillion* by J.R.R. Tolkien  
Presented by The Tea with Tolkien Community

## **Part 5: Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age**

*“Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age: In which these tales come to their end.”*

### **After the Storm**

In the beginning of Arda, Sauron was seduced to Melkor’s service. When Morgoth was overthrown, Sauron repented before Eönwë. However, when Eönwë commanded Sauron to come before the Valar for judgment, he refused and instead went back to his evil ways.

After the War of Wrath, the geography of Beleriand was changed, and most of it was now underwater.

As the Second Age began, many of the Noldor who would not go to the Blessed Realm dwelt in **Lindon**: including Gil-galad son of Fingon and Elrond Half-elven. The Elves built the **Grey Havens** in this area and were permitted by the Valar to depart from Middle-earth if they desired. Some of the Teleri moved to the realms of the Silvan Elves, in the woods and mountains. Some of the Noldor dwelt in Eregion (Hollin), which was near the West-gate of Moria; there they dwelt in friendship with the Dwarves. In this time, there was a period of peace in Middle-earth.

Sauron believed that the Valar had once again forgotten Middle-earth, and he set to work. He sought to turn Elves and Men to his service but was more successful with Men. He went by the name **Annatar, Lord of Gifts**, concealing his true identity. Gil-galad and Elrond were wary of Annatar and would not permit him into their lands.

## **The Making of the Rings of Power**

Sauron was welcomed by the Elves in Eregion and under his counsel they learned much and made Rings of Power. However, unbeknownst to them, Sauron forged the One Ring to rule all the others.

Sauron intended to use the Rings of Power to control the Elves, but they took off the rings once they realized he had forged the One Ring. In his anger, he came in open war against them and demanded the rings back.

The Elves fled along with three of their rings:

**Narya:** The Ring of Fire; ruby

**Nenya:** The Ring of Water; adamant

**Vilya:** The Ring of Air; sapphire

The Three Rings were hidden, and Sauron was unable to find them. These rings remained unsullied because **Celebrimbor** had forged them alone, and Sauron had not touched them. However, they were still under the rule of the One Ring.

After this, war continued between Sauron and the Elves. Eregion was destroyed, Celebrimbor was killed, and Moria was shut. **Imladris**, called Rivendell, was founded by **Elrond**.

## **Of Dwarves and Men**

Sauron gave seven Rings to the Dwarves and nine to Men.

The Dwarves did not easily fall under Sauron's control and used the Rings primarily to gain more wealth. In the end, some of these rings were consumed in fire, and others were recovered by Sauron.

Men fell under the dominion of Sauron much more easily. Those who had been given the Nine Rings became slaves to Sauron and were called the Nazgûl, the Ringwraiths. Sauron grew in power and worked toward three goals: to become master of all Middle-earth, to destroy the Elves, and to bring about the fall of Númenor.

## **Sauron in Númenor**

As told in the Akallabêth, Sauron brought about the destruction of Númenor. Afterwards, Sauron returned in spirit to Middle-earth and was dismayed to see that the power of Gil-galad had grown great in his absence.

## **The Last of the Númenóreans**

A small part of the people of Númenor survived its destruction. Elendil came to Lindon where he befriended Gil-galad and then established his realm beyond Ered Luin; his chief city was at Annúminas. Isildur and Anárion were carried South and came up the Great River Anduin.

They established their realm in the land that was later called **Gondor**; the Northern Kingdom was later named **Arnor**. Minas Ithil was the house of Isildur; Minas Anor was the house of Anárion; and they shared Osgiliath. The White Tree, grown from the fruit of Nimloth, was planted in Minas Ithil since Isildur was the one who had saved it.

## **The Seven Stones**

The Palantíri, the Seven Stones, were divided amongst the Kingdoms: three to Elendil and two to each of his sons. The Stones were used to communicate across distances, and by using them, the Númenóreans were able to learn many things that their enemies had wished to conceal.

## **In the Land of Mordor**

As the Exiles of Númenor established their realms in Arnor and Gondor, Sauron regained his strength in Mordor and built Barad-dûr, the Dark Tower; in that land was the mountain of fire, Orodruin (Mount Doom). Sauron took up a new form since his previous form had been destroyed with the fall of Númenor. Sauron gathered his servants, which included some Númenóreans that he had swayed to his service.

## **The Last Alliance**

Sauron attacked Minas Ithil and destroyed the White Tree of Isildur, but Isildur escaped with his wife and sons along with a seedling from the Tree. They fled seeking Elendil. Anárion held Osgiliath against Sauron for a time and drove him back into the mountains.

Elendil and Gil-galad formed a League called **the Last Alliance** and marched against Sauron. Gil-galad and Elendil held Mordor under siege for seven years. In this time, Anárion was slain. Finally Sauron himself came forth and wrestled with Gil-galad and Elendil. Both were slain, and the sword of Elendil, called Narsil, broke as he fell. Isildur used the hilt-shard of Narsil to cut the One Ring from Sauron's finger, defeating him for a time. **Thus ended the Second Age.**

# The Third Age

## The Fate of Isildur

“Thus began the Third Age of the World, after the Eldest Days and the Black Years; and there was still hope in that time...”

Isildur would not surrender the One Ring, despite the counsel of Elrond and Círdan. Instead he kept it for himself. Isildur returned to Minas Anor and planted the White Tree in memory of his brother.

Isildur gave the realm of the South to his brother's son, Meneldil, and marched north to take up his father's realm. However, he was ambushed along the way and ultimately slain along with most of his people after the Ring slipped from his finger. Luckily, he had left his wife and youngest son, Valandil, in Imladris.

**Also note:** the shards of Narsil were brought to Isildur's heir in Imladris. “Only three of his people came ever back over the mountains after long wandering; and of these one was Ohtar his esquire, to whose keeping he had given the shards of the sword of Elendil.”

Narsil was not remade at the time. Valandil lived in Annúminas. As the years went on, the Men of Westergesse became divided and dwindled. Eventually there was nothing left of the great Men of Númenor but a “strange people wandering secretly in the wild.” However, the line of Isildur remained unbroken.

## The Realm of Gondor

The Realm of Gondor endured and flourished for a time but eventually fell into ruin. In the time of the 23rd king in the line of Meneldil, Telemnar, a plague came from the east and the King, his children, and many of the people of Gondor died.

Minas Ithil was abandoned, and evil came once more to the Black Land as the Ringwraiths came to prepare for Sauron's return. In the time of Eärnil, the Ringwraiths came and took Minas Ithil. It was renamed Minas Morgul, the Tower of Sorcery. Osgiliath was deserted.

Minas Anor endured and was renamed Minas Tirith, the Tower of Guard. There was built a white tower, and the White Tree endured before the house of the Kings. Eärnur, son of Eärnil, was the last

King of Gondor. He fought in open combat in Minas Morgul but was taken captive into the city and never seen alive again. He left no heir.

### **The Stewards of Gondor**

After the death of the King, Gondor was ruled by the Stewards of the house of Mardil the Faithful. The Rohirrim, the Horsemen of the North, came to live in Rohan.

### **In Imladris**

Elrond lived in Imladris. The Heirs of Isildur were kept safe in Imladris in their youth and old age. The shards of Narsil were also kept with Elrond.

Círdan was Lord of the Grey Havens.

### **The Three Rings of Power**

During Sauron's reign, the Three Rings were not used or spoken of. The Ring of Sapphire was with Elrond in Rivendell; the Ring of Adamant was with Galadriel in Lothlorien. The beauty and bliss of these Elvish realms were preserved by the power of the Rings.

However, the Elves knew that if Sauron should come again and the One Ring was found or destroyed, the power of the Three Rings would fail, and the Elves would have to leave Middle-earth.

### **In Mirkwood**

- Mirkwood was once called Greenwood the Great, before the darkness of Sauron came into the forest. As evil spread throughout the forest, Thranduil's people held it at bay in the north. The people of Mirkwood began to fear the **Sorcerer of Dol Guldur** but did not realize he was in fact Sauron returned.

### **The Coming of the Istari**

*“Even as the first shadows were felt in Mirkwood there appeared in the west of Middle-earth the Istari, whom Men called the Wizards.”*

The **Istari** were sent as messengers from the Valar to contest with Sauron. They did not reveal their true names, but they were given various names by different people.

- **Mithrandir:** Gandalf; closest with the Elves and Elrond; did not make a home anywhere; most vigilant
- **Curunír:** Saruman; oldest; went most amongst Men; dwelt at Orthanc in Isengard
- **Radagast:** friend of beasts and birds
- **Others** of the Istari went east of Middle-earth and are not a part of this tale

## **The White Council**

The White Council was a gathering of the Wise in order to discuss the growing Shadow. It included Elrond, Galadriel, and Círdan, as well as Gandalf and Saruman. Saruman was the head of the Council, though Galadriel had hoped it would've been Gandalf.

Gandalf went to Gol Guldur and discovered that the Sorcerer was, in fact, Sauron. He returned to Imladris, and the White Council was called. While Gandalf urged the council to act swiftly against Sauron, Saruman urged them to wait and watch — and so they did.

Saruman had, in secret, begun to desire the Ring for himself, and so he sought to delay anyone else from finding it. After a while, the White Council drove Sauron from Dol Guldur, and Mirkwood was free from his influence for a time.

## **The Ring is Found**

Sauron fled to Mordor where the Ringwraiths had prepared for his coming. Unbeknownst to the Wise, the Ring was found and kept hidden for a long time. After this, it was found again and taken into the **Land of the Periannath, the Little People, the Halflings**, who dwelt in the west of Eriador. Mithrandir first learned of the Ring and, with the help of the Dúnedain, set a watch on the borders of the land of the Periannath. Eventually Sauron heard a rumor of the Ring and sent for the Nazgul to retrieve it, and war began.

## **The War of the Ring**

Aragorn, the Heir of Isildur, arose, taking the shards of Narsil reforged, and went to war with Sauron. There was battle in Rohan. Saruman the traitor was thrown down, and Isengard was broken.

In the last hopeless battle before the Black Gates of Mordor, Mithrandir, the sons of Elrond, the King of Rohan, the lords of Gondor, and the Heir of Isildur came against the full strength of Sauron. And they would have failed utterly if it were not for Frodo the Halfling.

*“There at the last they looked upon death and defeat, and all their valour was in vain; for Sauron was too strong. Yet in that hour was put to the proof that which Mithrandir had spoken, and help came from the hands of the weak when the Wise faltered. For, as many songs have since sung, it was the Periannath, the Little People, dwellers in hillsides and meadows, that brought them deliverance.”*

Frodo the Halfling and his servant passed into Mount Doom, and the Great Ring of Power was unmade in the fires from whence it came. Thus the Realm of Sauron was ended. The Heir of Isildur was crowned King of Gondor and Arnor. The White Tree flowered again.

### **Mithrandir**

After the War, it was revealed that Mithrandir (Gandalf) had carried the Red Ring of Power. After the destruction of the One Ring, the power of the Three Rings faded, and the Keepers of the Three left Middle-earth. At this, the age of the Eldar has come to an end and the time of Men began.

*“In the twilight of autumn it sailed out of Mithlond, until the seas of the Bent World fell away beneath it, and the winds of the round sky troubled it no more, and borne upon the high airs above the mists of the world it passed into the Ancient West, and an end was come for the Eldar of story and of song.”*