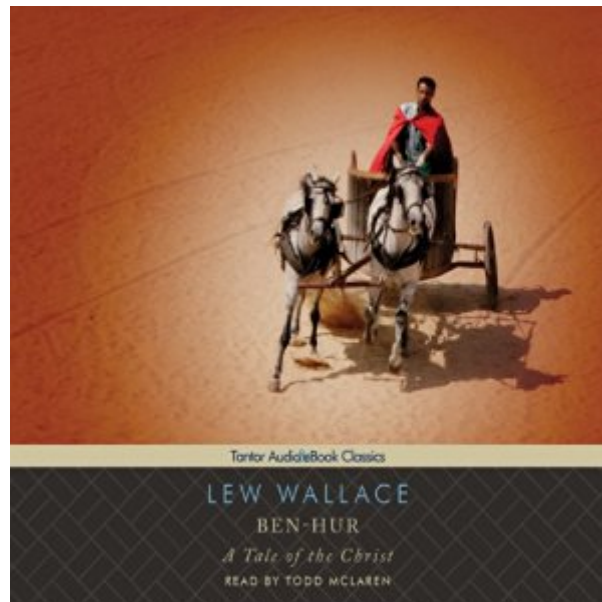


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# Ben-Hur: A Tale Of The Christ



## Synopsis

A classic of faith, fortitude, and inspiration, this faithful New Testament tale combines the events of the life of Jesus with grand historical spectacle in the exciting story of Judah of the House of Hur, a man who finds extraordinary redemption for himself and his family. Judah Ben-Hur lives as a rich Jewish prince and merchant in Jerusalem at the beginning of the first century. His old friend, Messala, arrives as commanding officer of the Roman legions. They become bitter enemies. Because of an unfortunate accident, Ben-Hur is sent as a slave in the mines, while his family is sent to leprosy caves. As Messala is dying from being crushed in a chariot race, he reveals where Ben-Hur's family is. On the road to find them, Ben-Hur meets the Christ as he is on the road to Golgotha to be crucified. That day changes Ben-Hur's life forever, for that is the day he becomes a believer.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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## Customer Reviews

In 1880, a retired Union General by the name of Lew Wallace completed his first historical novel while serving as governor in the Territory of New Mexico. He wrote it in response to questions raised by a famous agnostic sharing a train ride from Chicago to Indianapolis. At the time, Wallace wasn't as knowledgeable of the facts surrounding the life of Christ as he had thought. After doing extensive research, he was inspired to write what has become the definitive religious epic. Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ helped Wallace sort out his own beliefs about God and Christ, and inspired others to do the same. Today, it stands as the most widely read novel of the 19th Century, and one

of the most popular works of all time. It has never been out of print in its 130 year history, and has been made into several plays and four films. Ben-Hur reflects the life and journey of Lew Wallace. At the Battle of Shiloh, through an accident, he and his men arrived too late to help, making the Union losses significantly higher than they would have been. As a result, Wallace was disgraced. Judah Ben-Hur, through the accident of a loose roof tile, loses his home and property, his family is sent to prison, and he is sent to the galleys. Through a miracle of courage and circumstances, Wallace worked his way back, became a successful statesman and author, and is today remembered in the Hall of Statues in Washington, DC. Through a similar miracle, Ben-Hur works his way back to save his family and get revenge over those who caused their calamity. Ben-Hur is a story of courage and revenge, but it is also a story of redemption and salvation. I believe Wallace saw his life the same. Ben-Hur crosses paths with Christ more than once, so that, in the end, his hate and destructiveness are swallowed up in Christ's love and forgiveness. I believe Wallace saw the same miracle in his life. Ben-Hur did not take off immediately; but, after several years of word-of-mouth, everyone was reading it, especially pastors and their congregations. In 1900, two producers, Klaw and Erlanger, bought the rights to bring Ben-Hur to the New York stage. It was an amazing production that boasted five teams of horses and chariots on stage at once for the great chariot race. They used treadmills for the teams, with moving scenery. There was also a great sea battle that was considered spectacular. The success of the play inspired showmen in the fledgling industry of motion pictures to take note. The first film version of Ben-Hur was a 15-minute pirated version in 1907. This led to a law suit by Wallace that set the precedent for future book-to-movie copyright cases. Eventually, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer bought the rights, and produced the first legitimate adaptation in 1925, directed by Fred Niblo and starring Ramon Novarro. In 1959, William Wyler directed a second MGM production of the book, this time starring Charlton Heston. It won 11 Oscars, including Best Picture and Director. I found the novel by Lew Wallace to be more charming and less "big" than the 1959 film. Even the characters were more life-size. I pictured a Robert Taylor in the role of Ben-Hur rather than Charlton Heston. The only actor from the film that seemed to fit the novel was Finlay Currie as Balthasar, the wise man from Egypt. He was perfect. The entire first of eight books, into which Ben-Hur is divided, is occupied by the three wise men, of which only Balthasar is carried through to the rest of the book, and plays a significant role. In addition to playing Balthasar, Currie also narrates the film. There is far more focus on Christ in the novel, the 1900 stage play (in which he is played by a beam of light) and the 1925 film than in the 1959 version. The book wrestles with the question of whether He will be an earthly King or a Savior of souls. Ben-Hur, who is a Sadducee, hopes he will be an earthly King, and actually trains three legions of Galileans

in preparation to help Him overthrow the occupying Romans. But Balthasar is convinced Christ will be a Savior of souls, and tries to convince Ben-Hur of the same. It is not until the miraculous events of the last of the eight books that he accepts that fact, and accepts Christ as his Savior. To date, Ben-Hur is still the greatest Christian novel ever written, as well as one of the all-time great classics. Men still struggle with the question of whether Christ is an earthly King or a Savior of souls. To find out, we must all take similar journeys to Ben-Hur and Balthasar, and be hindered along the way by various Messalas. Not many of us will be like Balthasar and "get" it so quickly. Most of us will be more like Ben-Hur: accept what life throws at us with defiance, deal with it as best we can, struggle, realize we can't do it on our own, accept God's salvation, transcend our troubles through faith, and be transformed into someone new, someone Christ-like. Ben-Hur isn't just about Lew Wallace's journey from failure to freedom; like Pilgrim's Progress, it reflects the common journey all Christians must take. Waitsel Smith

In 1880 Union General Lew Wallace was stationed at a Western outpost when he began writing Ben Hur to dispel the boredom of his job. General Wallace who fought in some of the major campaigns of the Civil War was also questioning the meaning of his faith when the novel was written. There are few who do not know the basic premise of this novel and fewer still who have not seen the monumental MGM film based on it. This story chronicles the life of Judah Ben Hur and his desire for revenge against the Roman Messala and all of Rome for the wrongs done him and his family. In plot the story is simple enough. Ben Hur has been wrongly convicted of an attempt to kill the Roman Governor of Judea and sentenced to death on the Roman galleys. His fortune has been stolen and his family locked away in a dungeon. Ben Hur survives the galleys and defeats his enemy in the now famous chariot race at the Circus at Antioch. If this were the end of Wallace's story we would have been left with a decent story of revenge and nothing more. However, Wallace incorporates into his story (bookends it really) with the story of the Passion of Jesus. Wallace uses the coming of Jesus to examine the issues of his own faith. To analyze the dual nature of Jesus as King and Redeemer. To Ben Hur and the fiercely nationalist Jews of his time the world was waiting for a King to come to overthrow the power of Rome. Ben Hur sees this king as an element of his revenge against Rome and uses his restored fortune to build an army in support of the king. By the end of the novel Ben Hur realizes that the King was not to come to overthrow Rome but to be a Redeemer of souls. That the kingdom to be created was not to be one of this world. Wallace's narrative takes some time to get used to. It is sluggish and detail oriented. Literally everything is described. If you are looking for a fast read this book is not for you. If you are looking for a novel in the grand scale

which also works as a powerful religious meditation give this one a try. The book was a great best seller when it was written and it can still be powerful 120 years later.

Buyer beware-ok if you want an abridged copy ( I didn't) but I was in a rush and didn't notice!

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