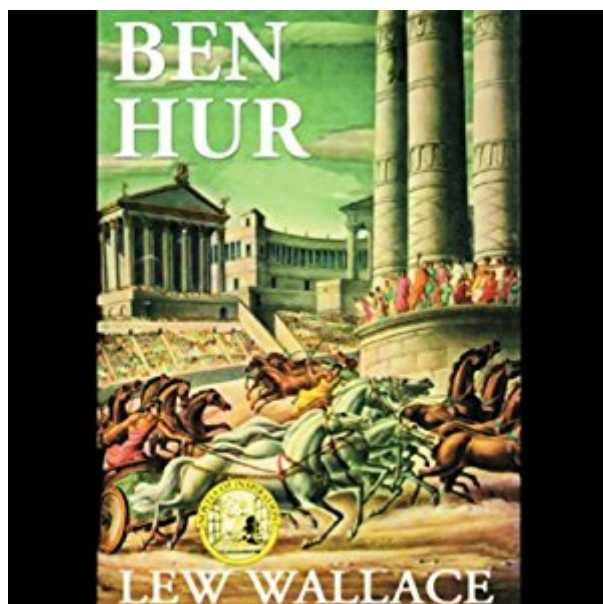


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Ben-Hur



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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.

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.

This novel written by Lew Wallace in the 1870's, and published in 1880 is nothing short of a timeless classic. It's timeless because it has been a big seller ever since it was published 124 years ago. Because the story is rich in character, people from all walks of religion and life can appreciate this story set in a time of global religious turmoil. Ben-Hur is the story of a Jew's life-long quarrel with his counterpart and nemesis Messala, amid the Roman occupation of ancient Palestine and among the rise of the Christian Religion. Brief Synopsis: As childhood friends-become-enemies, Judah and Messala always had a burning desire to over achieve each other. As tensions grew with the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood, the two parted ways only to meet one day under a very peculiar and dark circumstance. As a Roman Prince strode through the streets on his horse, followed by his royal guards and gang, Judah, on his home's rooftop, came flying out to see what all the hype was about. Upon his looking down at the Prince from the rooftop, Judah could scarce get close enough to the magical prince. As though kicked over by the foot of fate, a parcel of the rooftop was sent tumbling down toward the horseman sending his beast to run amuck. Then Roman Guard, Messala, in his final attempt to spite Judah Ben-Hur, quickly pointed his finger in the direction of the innocent Judah casting a glow of malice over him. Ben-Hur became nothing, and his life was reset anew, forever to surrender his soul to his captors. Now a slave, Judah, of the house of Hur, must redeem his life, and that of his family's name. He must rise above slavery and into poverty where he must begin his life anew. Quick is the rise of a true hero, one who knows defeat but cherishes freedom.

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