



Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ

Lew Wallace

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Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ is a novel by Lew Wallace published for the first time in 1880.

Considered "the most influential Christian book of the nineteenth century", it was the best-selling American novel from the time of its publication, superseding Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852).

Following release of the 1959 MGM film adaptation of Ben-Hur, which was seen by tens of millions and won 11 Academy Awards in 1960, book sales surpassed Gone with the Wind.

The story recounts the adventures of Judah Ben-Hur, a Jewish prince and merchant in Jerusalem in the 1st century. Judah's childhood friend Messala returns home as an ambitious commanding officer of the Roman legions. During a military parade, a tile falls from the roof of Judah's house and barely misses the Roman governor.

Although Messala knows that they are not guilty, he condemns the Ben-Hur family. Judah is sent to the Roman galleys for life; his mother and sister are imprisoned and all the family property is confiscated.

Jewish prince Judah Ben-Hur is betrayed by his childhood friend Messala and sentenced to life as a Roman slave. During a pirate attack in the Aegean, Ben-Hur saves the life of a galley commander, his fortunes improve and he returns to Galilee a free man. There, his quest for vengeance turns into insurrection, but his life is transformed when he witnesses Christ's baptism by John the Baptist.

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