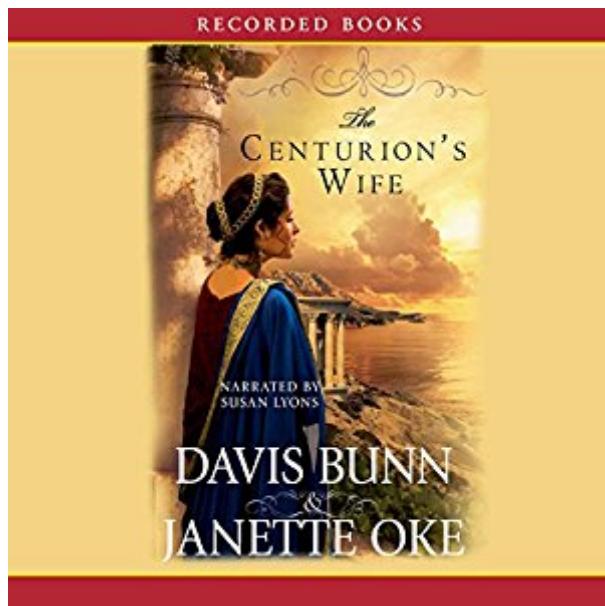


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The Centurion's Wife: Acts Of Faith, Book 1



Synopsis

Janette Oke has dreamed for years of retelling a story in a biblical time frame from a female protagonist's perspective, and Davis Bunn is elated to be working with her again on this sweeping saga of the dramatic events surrounding the birth of Christianity. . .and the very personal story of Leah, a young Jewess of mixed heritage trapped in a vortex of competing political agendas and private trauma. Caught up in the maelstrom following the death of an obscure rabbi in the Roman backwater of firstcentury Palestine, Leah finds herself also engulfed in her own turmoil facing the prospect of an arranged marriage to a Roman soldier, Alban, who seems to care for nothing but his own ambitions. Head of the garrison near Galilee, he has been assigned by Palestine's governor to ferret out the truth behind rumors of a political execution gone awry. Leah's mistress, the governor's wife, secretly commissions Leah also to discover what really has become of this man whose death and missing body is causing such furor. This epic drama is threaded with the tale of an unlikely romance and framed with dangers and betrayals from unexpected sources. At its core, *The Centurion's Wife* unfolds the testing of loyalties between two young people whose inner searchings they cannot express, between their irreconcilable heritages, and ultimately between their humanity and the Divine they yearn to encounter. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I got *The Centurion's Wife* for free on Kindle and thought it would be fun to revisit the novel. In it, we meet Leah, Pontius Pilate's niece, who lives in his palace as a personal servant to his wife Procula.

More than anything, she fears arranged marriage, having seen her sisters pawned off on abusive men. Yet Procula and Pilate insist she marry a Roman centurion named Alban, whom Leah has never met. Alban, for his part, has a lot more on his mind than potential marriage. He's trying to carve a niche for himself as a Roman officer, fighting Parthians and participating in the control of Judea. But he can't get the mysterious Jesus, who healed his beloved servant Jacob, out of his mind. Furthermore, Pilate has decreed Alban can only marry Leah if he finds out what really happened to Jesus. He was brutally crucified, but has vanished. Where is He now? What do His followers know? Is revolt imminent, and can Leah and Alban's love and faith stand up under intense personal stakes? The Centurion's Wife is an engaging look at the days following Jesus' resurrection. In many ways, it reads like a police procedural minus the cops, with Leah and Alban questioning different people, examining several locales, and piecing together their respective faiths. Familiar Bible stories and characters are brought to life here, particularly Mary and Martha. Joseph of Arimathea, high priest Caiphas, and of course Pilate, get good cameos as well. The overall plot holds your attention. Unfortunately, certain elements definitely got the shaft. This book is titled The Centurion's Wife, but Leah and Alban don't actually spend time together until more than halfway through. They grow to love each other, but not much attention is given to their relationship. It's hinted that both are under the gun, because Pilate fears Jesus' followers and would enact severe repercussions on any of them he encountered. Yet Leah and Alban are rarely if ever in any real danger from this. Their love isn't really tested, and they don't get a chance to grow in faith together. Our main couple's motivations also remain undeveloped. For example, we know Leah is terrified of marriage, but only because she tells other people that--over and over. She seems to have no other driving force, and her personal traits don't come through very well. For example, she's supposed to be a "doer" and woman of action, but we wouldn't know this if Martha didn't come right out and say it. We don't see Leah taking action or reaching out to others as much as she could have. Alban too, has weak motivations. He discusses how he feels with other people, as Leah does. But he never has a moment of introspection. We never get much insight into who this guy is, why he became a soldier, whether he's ever questioned the idea of faith before, and so forth. Overall, The Centurion's Wife is okay. But I would have liked to see much more character and plot development, and perhaps less attention on people recounting every detail of the crucifixion and resurrection. That's fine, but it took away from the uniqueness of the story. Leah and Alban could've been any two people dropped into first-century Judea. I'd like to see an author like Mesu Andrews tackle this sort of material; the results might go deeper.

I have read many books written by both Bunn and Oke and have also read collaborations. Many other reviewers have commented on anomalies in the story, and those struck me as well, but didn't detract too much from my overall enjoyment of the story. The centurion's lack of faith did puzzle me when I re-read the Biblical account because it quite clearly states Jesus was amazed and said "I tell you I have not found such great faith even in Israel.", and the servant was instantly healed. THAT centurion would surely not have suddenly become totally bewildered by who Jesus was - he already knew that Jesus had the power to heal by merely saying a word. BUT, to be fair, the book does focus more on the centurion trying to find out WHERE Jesus was now and did He and/or his followers pose a threat to Pilate. As to the tea drinking, I assumed it to be more of an infusion of dried herbs, rather than the tea we drink today, but I could be totally wrong. At least one reviewer mentioned that the Holy Spirit was given only to the disciples, and that Leah and Alban should not have received it. In Acts 2, after Pentecost, Peter tells the crowd to repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ and they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the promise is for all who are called; so for Leah and Alban to receive the gift is not unbiblical. On the whole I really did enjoy reading this book even though I have read similar stories and I had no problem with the detail given about various things/events/day-to-day happenings. For me the detail enhances the story, descriptions of terrain/fabric/chairs are all part of 'setting the scene' and IMO the authors have done this very well, seen through the eyes of someone who hasn't seen such opulence before; or in the case of Alban and the terrain, through the eyes of a seasoned warrior who knows this knowledge could be the difference between life or death. The book is well-written and although quite long, I found it very easy to read, with no glaring typos or grammatical errors to distract the eye. The main characters are not really as well-developed as they could have been, but Herod Antipas and Pontius Pilate are portrayed well, as is Linux, a Roman officer who becomes friends with Alban, and Dorit, a slave in Pilate's household. I took half a star off for the under-developed main characters, but still recommend it as a good, Christian read.

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