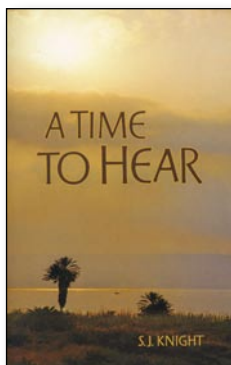


# A Jewish boy in the first century

Geoff Henstock



**A Time to Hear,**  
S. J. Knight, The  
Christadelphian, 2006,  
£10.00 plus postage.

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**A** VISIT TO any Christian bookshop will confirm that Christian fiction is a fast-growing literary genre. American publishers in particular have printed hundreds of such books, and it is clear that they are very popular. Some, like the *Left Behind* series, have been best-sellers, with sales running into the millions. These books cater to a demand from Christians for wholesome values-based fictional works in a world where much modern fiction is debased and unedifying.

Many Christadelphians read Christian fiction for relaxation. Some of these works, such as the *Left Behind* series, promote teachings at odds with Scripture, whilst others promote Biblical values but place relatively little emphasis on doctrine. It is a pity, therefore, that there are not more fictional works written by Christadelphians, promoting Biblical values while at the same time reinforcing true Scriptural understanding. In recent years a few such works have become available, including Anna Tikvah's *In Search of Life* and the anonymous *Cornelia's Story* (both published by the Christadelphian Scripture Study Service), and Sister Debbie Wood's books *The Early Years*, *The New Century*, *A Precious Hope* and *Year by Year* (published by The Christadelphian Advocate). To that list can now be added a new publication from The Christadelphian, *A Time to Hear*.

This book is a substantial work of 570 pages. Set in the Holy Land in the days of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, its central character is a Galilean boy named Dan, the son of a widowed shepherd. Growing up in a humble, devout family, Dan has an enquiring and spiritually alert mind. We join

him and his family circle on a spiritual journey as they become increasingly aware that they live in momentous times. The book provides an insight into Jewish life in Galilee at the time of our Lord's first advent, and as such is valuable for any Bible reader. More importantly, however, it also has profound moral lessons for this generation, which lives on the eve of his second advent.

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*"Dan wasn't sure he really knew who Messiah was. Where was he coming from? And how would he get here? What would he do when he came?"*

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The author's incisive comments on the covenants of promise provide valuable insights about their centrality to the gospel message. The book also refers incidentally to many aspects of the Law, the Psalms and the prophets, and in the process offers much interesting instruction. As with the cultural aspects of the book, these expositional comments are evidence of the high standard of scholarship that underpins the work. In relation to the cultural matters, it would have been interesting to know about the source material from which the picture of life in first-century Galilee was drawn (this was done in *Cornelia's Story*, also set in the first century, where information is included as end notes), but it is acknowledged that this would have added substantially to the size of the work and might have been a distraction to many readers.

The author has a colourful and expressive writing style which at times borders on the poetic. The plot is well paced and has several unexpected twists and turns that sustain the reader's interest. It runs the gamut of emotions from mirth to pathos, but never becomes cloyingly sentimental or stilted. The characters are real people, their strengths and weaknesses sketched eloquently. This book will appeal to readers of all ages and backgrounds. In particular, however, the book is ideal for both interested friends and senior Sunday School scholars because it reinforces many fundamental first principles, including the importance of repentance and preparation for the Messiah. *A Time to Hear* is heartily recommended, and it must be hoped that the book enjoys a wide circulation and readership.