

THE WHOLE STORY

Matthew 24:36-44 Text 44b *“the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”*

In 1898 Morgan Robertson wrote a book titled, *The Wreck of the Titan*. It was a story of a huge ocean liner that struck an iceberg and sank in the middle of the ocean. Now, that sounds a lot like the *Titanic*, doesn't it? But it's not! The two stories are very similar, though. His ship, the *Titan* was about a ship 800 feet long. The real *Titanic* was 882 feet long. But there's more! The *Titan* displaced 66,000 tons of water. The *Titanic* displaced 70,000 tons. *Titan* traveled up to 25 knots per hr. The *Titanic* did the same. Each ship could carry 3000 passengers. But Robertson wrote his novel about the *Titan* fourteen years *before* the *Titanic* sank after hitting an iceberg in the North Atlantic April 14, 1912. How Robertson described everything so accurately is amazing! How did his book of fiction be so close to reality?

But what's even more fascinating is, when you read the Bible, it accurately predicted events that happened after the Bible was written. And some are yet to occur! Which proves, prophecy matters! Billy Graham said, *“the most neglected teaching in the church today is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ”*. And you can hardly turn a page of Scripture without finding some reference to some future event.

In our lesson today Jesus said, *“no one knows the day and hour when the Son of Man is coming”*. Why is that? Because it's going to happen *“at an hour you do not expect.”* Jesus said it would happen just as the flood happened in Noah's day. God had told Noah it was going to happen. He even gave Noah plans to build an ark to protect his family and all the animals. (Genesis 6:13, 14; 7:1-4) And Noah warned the people of the coming destruction. But they ignored his warnings. (2 Peter 2:5) The Bible says, *“they took no note until the Flood came and swept them all away.”* They didn't listen to Noah! *“People were eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the Ark. Then the flood came unexpectedly and destroyed them all.”* (Luke 17:26-27) Jesus said it's going to be the same when two men are out standing in a field. One will be taken. The other left. This *removal of believers from the world* is what's called *The Rapture*.

And the *Rapture's* not something you should fear, if you are a believer. When a thief comes, a thief only comes to take that which is of value. No thief breaks in to steal your dirty laundry. Or your garbage. A thief comes for that which has value. So, it is in the *Rapture!* Jesus is coming for those who have great value! Those have been filled with the precious Holy Spirit. And this is a reminder for you! You never know how much time you have left! Or how much time your unsaved friends or family may have left. Jesus told this as a reminder to *stay on track* doing the work and the will of God. That's what Scripture means when it says, *“stay steadfast”*.

And so, it is with *Advent!* Today, we begin a new church year. *Advent* is the Christian season for preparation for the Birth of Christ at Christmas. It begins the liturgical year in Western Christianity. The name *Advent* was adopted from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming; arrival". And it's translated into Greek as *parousia*. In the New Testament, the term *advent* is also used for the *Second Coming of Christ*. So, *Advent* is the season of *expectant waiting*. A time of *preparation*. A time for *getting ready* for the celebration of the Birth of Christ at Christmas. And it's a time of getting ready for the return of Christ. His *Second Coming*. Yes, it's both!

But being ready to meet Jesus never has been, and never will be about how good you've been at Christmastime! Because a time will come when you're going to need someone who will stand in your place before God's Judgment Throne to speak on your behalf. An Advocate! You're going to need someone who loves you enough to say, *“Father God, I know this person is guilty. Take my life instead!”* And Jesus is the *only One* qualified to do that! He said it like this: *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to God the Father except through me.”* That's the only way you're not going to be *Left-Behind*. The only way to do that is for you to know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. You will have put Him first place in your life. No longer is your goal in life simply pleasing yourself. Your goal in life has changed. It's now pleasing God!

So, it's up to you whether, or not, you will be left behind. Because the *Rapture* of the church is going to happen! It's going to be worldwide. All at the same time! True believers in Jesus Christ will all be *“taken”* at the same time causing every country on Earth to be in complete chaos! Every government will have to act quickly. Because there will be chaos. There will be terror. Millions of people will suddenly disappear from the face of the earth! And it's going to happen. In the twinkling of an eye! The snap of a finger! But it will be silent! The only noise that will be heard around the world will be crying. Wailing. Screaming coming from millions of people asking, *“where have all those who have suddenly disappeared gone”*. Family. Friends. Spouses. Children. Grandchildren. Neighbors. It could happen today. It could happen tonight. It could happen tomorrow. It could happen right now! But nobody hearing this must be left behind.

Revelation 1:7 tells of *The Day of the Lord*. But what *part* of *The Day of the Lord* is it describing? *The Tribulation?* *The Second Coming?* *The Millennium?* (Which is the thousand-year reign of the Lord on Earth.) All are taught in the Old

Testament as well as the New Testament. But the *Rapture*? *It's not there!* However, 1 Corinthians 15 refers to the *Rapture* as a *mystery*; ⁵⁰ *I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.* ⁵¹ *Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep. But we shall all be changed.* ⁵² *In a moment. In the twinkling of an eye. At the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable. And we shall be changed!* ⁵³ *For this perishable body must put on the imperishable. And this mortal body must put on immortality.* ⁵⁴ *When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."* ⁵⁵ *"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"* ⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin. And the power of sin is the Law.* ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* ⁵⁸ *Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast. Immovable. Always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

And the *Rapture* is described in the entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 15 which begins with the *Rapture* and ends at the *Millennium*; *"Look, He is coming with the clouds. And every eye will see Him. Even those who pierced Him. And all peoples on earth will mourn because of Him. So shall it be! Amen."* You may be wondering, what has all this to do with the Season of *Advent*. Well, *it is the whole story*. And a whole story must have a beginning, a middle, and an ending. There's a wonderful hope that one day Jesus will take us away to heaven to be with Him. And in doing that, we will escape the coming wrath. *The Tribulation*. That terrible period at the *End Times* when God judges Israel and the world for their unrighteousness. It's the time when God prepares to establish Jesus as the King of the World.

So, what kind of hope is that? It's expectation! We must have expectation as we look forward to the *Tribulation* period. Or even a part of it. Or even think about the possibility of enduring it? We have this '*hope*' that's translated in the Bible as "*expectation*". We have this *expectation*—this hope as the Church, that we will be removed from the *coming wrath*, the *Tribulation*. However, there is the belief that those who are left behind at the *Rapture* will become *Tribulation Saints*. They will be those who are saved *after* the *Rapture*. They won't just expect Jesus to return. They will *long* for it! Because they will have been persecuted far beyond what the church is being persecuted for today.

However, those who remain unsaved during those days will have great fear. They didn't have anything to do with God. Instead, they praised all that's unholy. The *Antichrist* and his "*one world system*". And it's happening right now! A *one-world system* is taking shape right before your eyes! Some believe The United Nations, and its International Court of Justice are attempting to take over the political and judicial authority of every nation on Earth to rule the world as an authoritarian one-world government. There are 195 nations in the world today. 193 countries are member states of the United Nations, and two non-member *observer-states*: the *Holy See* of the Roman Catholic Church in Rome, known as Vatican City where the Pope in his role as the Bishop of Rome has ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the Catholic Church and the Vatican; and the State of Palestine on the western Mediterranean Coast beside Israel. It is believed the United Nations is working to make all 195 nations submissive to international law. And there's NO mention of God in any this!

The U.S. Senate is even now, considering legislation that could have serious consequences for religious freedom. The so-called *Respect for Marriage Act* goes way beyond making same-sex marriage federal law. It will lead to more attacks on American's religious liberty. It poses a threat to Christians who hold to a traditional view of marriage.

So, if you doubt the fallen nature of the world and humanity, just look around you. Not only our country, but the whole world is described in the *Book of Revelation*. Read it. It will give you a new perspective about all of this. And if you do read it, your attitude should be different regarding the *Rapture*. You should begin to have a blessed *hope*. You should *not* be discouraged by the thought of facing the wrath of God during the reign of the Antichrist. Your attitude should become one of *hope*.

And after you've read the whole story, you should be looking anxiously for Messiah's first coming, which is His Birth. Then you should be anticipating His Second Coming. His Return when He shall reign forever and forever. And that's the Spirit of *Advent*. And it's the whole story! AMEN