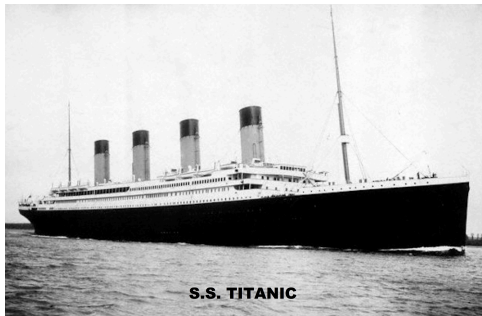


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### Magical Evenings Turned Into Nightmares



It was a beautiful night and faces were aglow with happiness. Some were on their honeymoon, some were elderly folks, but one thing they all had in common, they were having a “magical evening”. The band played, folk danced, some were in the dining rooms waiting for and enjoying beautiful meals. There was pure luxury in every area, and life was wonderful on this star studded evening.

Then it happened!

An ominous sound was heard. The lights flickered, the mighty ship gave a shudder, and suddenly the look of fear swept across their faces. The contrasts and similarities between the Titanic, the Costa Concordia and Belshazzar in the scriptures are stark.

It was April 1912 when the Titanic, the most luxurious ship of its day, yet due to human error and pride its hull was ripped open by part of an iceberg beneath the surface. In January 2012, the Costa Concordia, was fitted out with luxurious decor, but due to human error and pride, was ripped open by a rock beneath the surface. In both cases magical evenings were turned into nightmares. None of those on the ships thought they would die that night. None thought that they had walked the decks with quietness of heart for the last time, none thought that eternity was only a matter of hours, minutes, or seconds away. But, before each of the nights was over, individuals on both ships would be dead.

We find in the scriptures there was another night. Belshazzar was having a feast with a thousand of his lords and ladies. It also was a “magical night”. The ancient candlesticks shed a flickering light across the banqueting hall, Babylon with all its glory was magnificent, and now the elite of the kingdom sat eating and drinking, having a wonderful time.

Then it happened!

Suddenly, without warning, the fingers of a hand appeared upon the wall and with deliberateness began to write four words: “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN” (Dan. 5:5, 8, 24-25). The magical night had become a nightmare, for it was not an ominous sound but ominous writing, no one knowing what it meant. The music stopped and faces turned pale. The knees of the king smote together as he trembled (Dan. 5:6). Like the people hundreds of years later on the Titanic and Costa Concordia, that was the night he would die and go out to meet God (Dan. 5:30).

The scriptures inform us that which we are reluctant to face. Time marches on and we know not “the day of our death” (Gen. 27:2). There is written in them: “For what is your life?” (Jam. 4:14); “Our days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle” (Job. 7:6). “We know not what shall be on the morrow” (Jam. 4:14).

Many years ago there would be sung the words of the old hymn:

Oh come sinner come, for why do you delay  
The pressing invitation is that you should come today  
Tomorrow has no promise that it can give to you  
Tomorrow is eternity just hidden from your view.

O come sinner come, accept the proffered grace  
For death may soon be calling you, into its cold embrace  
The summer will be ended, the harvest will be past  
Your lamentation then will be, "My soul is lost at last"

As believers, the truths concerning our passing years and unknown death are equally true. Therefore, we must stop and ask ourselves some questions:

- 1) How has the years of my life been spent, wasted or used for God's glory?
- 2) How spiritual is my zeal, or am I just functioning in formality?

It is a fact that one day, perhaps today, our journey here will end, perhaps not with old age but suddenly, unexpectedly, and possibly not even being aware until it has happened. As we will look back, what value will there be put on "things"? Then added to this is the matter of the imminent coming again of our Lord. Some years ago I wrote the following:

The Lord may come, perhaps today  
To call His waiting saints away  
I'll be there by His side, to be His holy bride,  
The Lord will come, perhaps today!

The Lord will come, perhaps at noon  
His coming, Oh it must be soon  
The dead shall then arise, We'll meet them in the skies,  
The Lord will come, perhaps at noon!

The Lord will come, perhaps tonight  
My faith will then give way to sight  
I'll see His lovely face, bask in His warm embrace,  
The Lord will come, perhaps tonight!

May the Lord grant to us the desire to live as if this were to be our last day, last hour, or last minute before going to meet Him.

*. . . Rowan Jennings*

**"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"**  
*Hebrews 9:27*