

# ***TITANIC – The Big Question***

## **The Fateful Journey**

On Wednesday, 10 April 1912, the Titanic began her maiden voyage from Southampton, England, bound for New York. She made two port calls taking on passengers in Cherbourg, France and Queenstown (Cobh), County Cork, Ireland. Four days later, approximately 400 miles south of the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, Frederick Fleet, lookout on the Titanic, spotted a large iceberg directly in the path of the ship. The time was 23:40. The alarm was sounded and evasive action was taken, but a collision with the iceberg resulted in serious damage to the starboard side of the ship. Water poured in and flooded five of the watertight compartments, causing the Titanic's bulkhead to dip below the waterline. At 02:20 the icy sea claimed the 'unsinkable' ship as another victim.

## **The Question**

When news broke of the sinking of the Titanic, the question on everyone's lips was, 'Whose fault is it?' When it emerged that over 1500 people were lost, the same question was asked. At the enquiry established to investigate the tragedy, this question was top of the agenda. People are still asking, 'Whose fault was it?' Many have suggested that responsibility for the sinking of the ship and the resultant loss of so many lives lay with some or all of the following:

## **The Ship's Designer**

Thomas Andrews was the designer of the Titanic. The ship had sixteen watertight compartments and for this reason it was widely believed that she was unsinkable. However, there were flaws in the bulkhead height and when the ship struck the iceberg the first five watertight compartments quickly flooded. As the weight of the water continued to pull down the bow of the ship, Andrews, having inspected the damage, concluded that the ship could not be saved. Captain Smith then asked the inevitable question: "How much time do we have?" Andrews replied, "Approximately two hours." It was now time to launch the lifeboats.

The Titanic was originally designed to carry sixty-four lifeboats. However, Andrews had reduced this to twenty, consisting of fourteen wooden boats (65 person capacity), four Englehardt collapsible boats (47 person capacity) and two emergency lifeboats (40 person capacity). The total lifeboat capacity amounted to 1178 people. According to the Titanic's Clearance Certificate, signed by immigration officer EJ Sharpe, there were 2208 people (1316 passengers and 892 crew) aboard the liner when she departed from Queenstown.

## **The Ship's Builders**

Approximately three million rivets were used in the building of the Titanic. Some of these rivets were recovered from the wreck. When analysed and tested it was discovered that they had been made of sub-standard iron. When the Titanic collided with the iceberg the impact caused many of the rivets to break, causing sections of the ship to immediately come apart. Experts have concluded that if better quality iron rivets had been used, the ship would have been better able to withstand the impact and the damage may not have been so serious as to cause the Titanic to sink.

## **The Ship's Owners**

The Chairman of the White Star Line, Bruce Ismay, was a passenger on the Titanic. He was determined that the ship would complete the journey in record time, thus enabling the White Star Line to guarantee prospective passengers a faster Atlantic crossing than that offered by other shipping companies. To achieve this, he put pressure on Captain Smith to maintain the speed of the ship at all costs.

## **The Ship's Captain**

Captain Smith had ignored a number of ice warnings which had been sent to the Titanic by other ships. He cancelled a scheduled boat drill on the morning of the collision. He neglected to order the ship to slow down when approaching the ice field. He delayed issuing the order to load the lifeboats. There was a delay of one hour between the time of impact and the launching of the first lifeboat.

### The Ship's Lifeboat Officers

If the officers in charge of loading the lifeboats had insisted that all the boats be loaded to full capacity, many more people would have been saved. However, when the first of the wooden lifeboats (65 person capacity) was lowered, there were only twenty-eight on board. The second boat to be launched had a capacity for forty, but carried only twelve. Two collapsible lifeboats were never launched.

### The Ship's Wireless Operator

The final iceberg warning sent to the Titanic was from a nearby ship, the Californian. She had stopped for the night about nineteen miles north of the Titanic. John George Phillips, senior wireless operator on the Titanic, was busy sending out telegrams and greetings from many of the passengers. Suddenly, the message blared into his earphones, "Ice Bergs, Ice Pack, Ice Field ahead!" How did he respond? He cut off the Californian's operator with the words, "Shut up, I am busy!" That final ice warning was never reported to the captain of the Titanic. Nobody was told of that message until the enquiry was opened.

### The Captain of the Californian

The Californian was captained by Stanley Lord. This ship was so close that the passengers on the Titanic could see her lights. The Californian's radio operator turned the radio off at 23:15, and went to bed. Approximately one hour later the crew on watch informed Captain Lord that rockets were being fired from a nearby ship, a large liner. In the captain's opinion this meant there must have been a party on board the ship, so no action was taken. If the radio on the Californian had not been turned off they would have heard the distress messages from the Titanic and could have reached the liner in time to rescue all the passengers and crew.

### The Big Question

Today, over one hundred years after the sinking of the Titanic and the loss of over 1500 lives, people still ask, 'Whose fault was it?'

### Saved or Lost

As news filtered through concerning the fate of the Titanic, a list containing the names of the passengers was placed on the notice board in the offices of the White Star Line. The names on the list were divided into two categories - those who were saved and those who were lost.

The publication of the identities of people who are saved and those who are lost will happen again one day, but on this occasion it will involve their eternal destination. According to the Scriptures everyone, including those lost at sea, will stand before God on Judgment Day. The apostle John writes:

'I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave gave up their dead. And all were judged according to their deeds. Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death. And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire'.<sup>1</sup>

**Question:** Whose fault will it be if, on Judgment Day, your name is included with those who are eternally lost?

### Another Fateful Journey

We are nearer today to the end of life's journey than ever before. Perhaps, like the passengers on the Titanic, you are hoping to arrive safely at your desired destination, but are unaware of the danger that lies ahead. 'As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous—not even one...For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard."<sup>2</sup> As sinners, we are subject to sin's penalty. 'For the wages [penalty] of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord'.<sup>3</sup> This includes spiritual death, physical death and, for all who die in their sins, eternal death, which is conscious, everlasting punishment in Hell.

### Rescue

However, God has provided a way of escape for us. 'This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners".<sup>4</sup> In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, "For

this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”<sup>5</sup> Jesus paid the penalty for the guilt of our sins when He died on the cross as our substitute and sin bearer. The prophet Isaiah, referring to Jesus, writes:

‘But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all’.<sup>6</sup>

By paying sin’s penalty on our behalf, Jesus secured for us a pardon. This pardon is put to our account when we repent of our sins and put our faith in Christ. The apostle Paul writes:

‘Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.’<sup>7</sup> God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it’.<sup>8</sup>

### **Danger of Delay**

Within a couple of hours, more than 1500 of the Titanic’s passengers lost their lives and slipped into eternity.

#### **Questions:**

- If your life ended suddenly, within the next couple of hours, would you be saved or eternally lost?
- How much time do you have left?

According to the Scriptures, ‘The time that remains is very short’.<sup>9</sup> We are left in no doubt concerning the fact that ‘Now is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and shower righteousness upon you.’<sup>10</sup> On the Titanic, there was a delay between the time of impact and the launching of the first lifeboat. Many lives were lost as a result of this delay. Some of the passengers also delayed in responding to the call to assemble on the boat deck as they refused to believe the Titanic could sink. For many of them this was a critical delay.

#### **Questions:**

- If you had been a passenger on the Titanic, whose fault would it have been if you were lost because of your delay in responding to the call?
- Whose fault will it be if you are eternally lost because of your delay in responding to God’s call?

The Lord said, “I called you so often, but you wouldn’t come. I reached out to you, but you paid no attention.”<sup>11</sup>

### **God’s Provision**

**Question:** “What must I do to be saved?”

**Answer:** ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved’.<sup>12</sup>

The Lord, in His mercy, has made provision for the rescue and the safe arrival in Heaven of all who will repent of their sins and put their faith in Him.

Jesus said:

“For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”<sup>13</sup> There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.”<sup>14</sup>

**Question:** ‘So what makes us think we can escape if we ignore this great salvation that was first announced by the Lord Jesus himself and then delivered to us by those who heard him speak?’<sup>15</sup>

**Answer:** There is no escape if we neglect or disregard the Lord’s offer of mercy. However, it is not too late to respond to God’s call, ‘For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”’<sup>16</sup>

But make no delay,

'For God says, "At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you. Indeed, the "right time" is now. Today is the day of salvation'.<sup>17</sup>

### The Big Question

If your soul is eternally lost because of your refusal to accept God's offer of rescue, whose fault will it be?

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### Scripture References

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|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>1:</b> Revelation 20:12-15 | <b>10:</b> Hosea 10:12       |
| <b>2:</b> Romans 3:10, 23     | <b>11:</b> Proverbs 1:24     |
| <b>3:</b> Romans 6:23         | <b>12:</b> Acts 16:30, 31    |
| <b>4:</b> 1 Timothy 1:15      | <b>13:</b> Luke 19:10        |
| <b>5:</b> John 3:16           | <b>14:</b> John 14:2, 3      |
| <b>6:</b> Isaiah 53:5, 6      | <b>15:</b> Hebrews 2:3       |
| <b>7:</b> Romans 5:1          | <b>16:</b> Romans 10:13      |
| <b>8:</b> Ephesians 2:8, 9    | <b>17:</b> 2 Corinthians 6:2 |
| <b>9:</b> 1 Corinthians 7:29  |                              |