

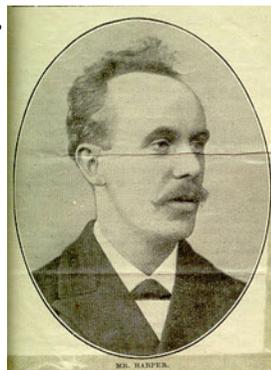


# The Titanic

A little known  
story

On 10th April 1912 the Titanic left Southampton on its maiden voyage, bound for New York. On board were around 1,317 passengers and 885 crew. At 11.40 pm on the night of 14th April the ship struck an iceberg and 1,517 of those on board perished. Of course the story is well known and there will be much in the media as we approach the hundredth anniversary of this tragic event. What is less well known is the story of one of the passengers whose name was John Harper.

John Harper was born in 1872 in Renfrewshire, not far from Glasgow. He became a Christian at the age of 13 when God spoke to him through the well known verse in John 3. 16 - 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' John gladly believed in Jesus Christ, his sins were forgiven and he received the promise of everlasting life. Five years later he began to preach God's word and his ministry was used by God to bring many others in and around Glasgow to Jesus Christ for salvation. In 1910 he left Scotland for London where, again, many people were converted under his preaching. He was then invited to take a series of meetings in Chicago, which God wonderfully blessed. After returning to London he was persuaded to revisit Chicago for more meetings. He booked his passage to America on the Titanic. By this time his wife had died, but with him was his 6 year old daughter, Nana.



According to documented reports, as soon as it was apparent that the ship was going to sink, John Harper immediately took his daughter to a lifeboat. No doubt John could have easily boarded this boat to safety; however, it never seems to have crossed his mind. He bent down and kissed his precious little girl; looking into her eyes he told her that she would see him again someday. Then, tearfully, he turned and headed towards the crowd of desperate humanity on the sinking ocean liner.

As the rear of the huge ship began to lurch upwards, it was reported that Harper was seen making his way up the deck yelling, "Women, children and unsaved into the lifeboats!" By 'unsaved' he meant those who were not saved from God's condemnation for their sin and so faced eternal punishment. He was concerned they might live to make their peace with God through Christ before they died and faced His judgement.

Minutes later, the Titanic began to rumble deep within. Most people thought it was an explosion, but the ship was literally breaking in half. At this point, many people jumped off the decks and into the icy, dark waters below.

Among the hundreds of people who went into the water that night was John Harper. He was seen swimming frantically to people in the water, desperate to tell them to believe on Jesus Christ before the hypothermia became fatal. Mr. Harper swam up to one young man who had climbed up on a piece of debris. Rev. Harper asked him between breaths, "Are you saved? Are you right with God?" The young man replied that he was not.

Harper then tried to persuade him to believe on Christ that his soul might be saved, only for the young man to refuse. John Harper then took off his life jacket and threw it to the man and said, "Here then, you need this more than I do..." and swam away to other people. A few minutes later Harper swam back to the young man and after pleading with him again this same young man believed on Jesus Christ for eternal salvation. This man was one of the 710 survivors.

Four years later, at a survivors' meeting, this young man stood up and in tears recounted how that after John Harper had led him to Christ, Mr Harper had tried to get back to help other people, but because of the intense cold, he had grown too weak to swim. His last words before going under in the icy waters were from Acts 16. 31; "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved". While other people were trying to reach the lifeboats to save their own lives, John Harper gave up his life so that others could be saved, not only from drowning but from condemnation.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends..." (John 15.13)

John Harper acted heroically that night because he knew the vital importance of knowing Jesus Christ as Saviour, and he was prepared to lose his own life trying to get the message across. Many people tragically died that night, but those who died believing in Jesus were taken into heaven, their souls saved by the Saviour in whom they trusted. However our own lives may eventually end in this world, we too can be sure of heaven by trusting in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.

