

The Gables – Ides of March

Opening Story:

The “Ides of March” is a date that corresponds to March 15th on the Roman calendar. It became famous as the date on which Julius Caesar, Emperor of Rome, was assassinated in 44 BC.

This event was immortalized in William Shakespeare’s play, *Julius Caesar*. In the play, a soothsayer warns Julius Caesar to “beware the Ides of March.” Caesar scoffed at the idea that he was in danger, not knowing that a group of sixty conspirators, led by Brutus and Cassius, were planning to kill him later that day while he visited the Roman Senate.

In one of the greatest examples of betrayal in all of English literature, Julius Caesar turned to his friend and protégé, as he was about to be killed, and said, “Et tu, Brute?” or in English, “and you Brutus?”

Dialog:

Rick: Hey Donna! Do you remember visiting Virginia Beach a few years ago?

Donna: Of course.

Rick: Do you remember those guys standing on street corners, with signs hanging from their necks, proclaiming that the world would end on May 21, 2011?

Donna: Yeah. They were crazy.

Rick:

Harold Camping, a radio evangelist, predicted that Jesus Christ would return to earth on May 21, 2011, whereupon the saved would be taken up to heaven in the rapture, and that there would follow five months of fire, brimstone and plagues on Earth, with millions of people dying each day, culminating on October 21, 2011, with the final destruction of the world. He had previously predicted that Judgment Day would occur on or about September 6, 1994 (Source: *Wikipedia*)

Was his prediction true?

Donna: Obviously, not. We’re still here, aren’t we?

Rick:

Yes, we are. There also was a prediction made that the world would end on December 21, 2012, the last day of the ancient Mayan calendar. An action-adventure film was even made about it entitled, *2012*, which starred John Cusack.

Did this prediction turn out to be true?

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Donna: No, it did not. As I said before, we're still here, aren't we?

Rick: That's right. Why is it that people don't pay any attention to prophecies?

Donna: Because many of them have been proven to be false, and the people making them have been proven to be unreliable.

Rick: Correct. Does that mean that all prophecies are false?

Donna: Not necessarily. Some prophecies may be true and some may be false.

Rick: How do you know which are true and which are false?

Donna: It depends on who's telling you and how reliable they are.

Rick: Correct. Did you know the Bible is full of prophecies?

Donna: I've heard that, but how can you prove whether any of them are true or not?

Rick: Here are some examples of prophecies made about Jesus during the Old Testament era that were later fulfilled during the New Testament era:

Old Testament Messianic Prophecy	Old Testament Reference	New Testament Fulfillment
He will be of the seed of Abraham	Genesis 12:1-3	Matthew 1:1, Galatians 3:16
He will come from the tribe of Judah	Genesis 49:10	Matthew 1:2
He will come from the line of David	2 Samuel 7	Matthew 1:1
He will be born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:23
He will rule the world one day	Isaiah 9:6	Matthew 28:18
He will suffer for our transgressions	Isaiah 53, Psalm 22	John 19:1-30
He will enter Jerusalem on 04/06/0032	Daniel 9:20-27	Matthew 21:1-11
He will be born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:6
He will enter Jerusalem on a donkey	Zechariah 9:9	Matthew 21:5
He will be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver	Zechariah 11:12-13	Matthew 26:14-15
His garments will be divided	Psalm 22:18	John 19:24
He will be pierced	Zechariah 12:10	John 19:34
His bones will not be broken	Zechariah 12:10	John 19:37

The Old Testament books I referenced were written 500 to 1,500 years before Jesus was even born. To me, the most compelling prophecy is the one found in Daniel 9. It predicted the Messiah will come 483 years after the rebuilding of Jerusalem was decreed, as described in Nehemiah 2.

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Donna: How could the Bible predict the exact date on which something would happen 483 years later?

Rick: Rather than having me explain that, let me read from a commentary on this topic by John MacArthur:

And so, all we need to do is calculate it a little bit. If Daniel is correct, [from] March 14, 445 BC to April 6, 32 AD is gonna be 173,880 days. Well, let's think about it. From March 14, 445 BC to April 6, 32 AD is only 477 years and 24 days. So we're a few years short. We have to deduct a year because 1 BC and 1 AD is the same year. So we really have 476 years and 24 days. Now, we have to convert to our calendar of 365 days, so we multiply that all out, plus 24 days, and we get 173,764; and we're still short. But we have Leap Year every four years. So 476 divided by 4, gives us 119 Leap Years, so we add 119 more days to 173,664, and we get 173,883 days, 3 days too many.

You say, "Close is good enough for me." Close is not good enough for God. Sir Robert Anderson went to the Royal Observatory in England and he found out that according to their solar calculations, a year is 1/128 of a day longer on the calendar than a solar year. So every 128 years, we have to lose a day. And if you're dealing with 483 years, that'll be 3 of those. So you drop those out and you have 173,880 days. Just exactly as the Word of God said.

Donna: That's incredible. I've never heard that before.

Rick: April 6, 32 AD, is the day that Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, otherwise known as the first Palm Sunday. We can have faith that God's word is true and accurate.

Donna: If the Bible contains prophecies that accurately predicted what happened in the past, could it also contain prophecies that accurately predict what will happen in the future?

Rick: Yes. An excellent example of this is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18:

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.

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This passage refers to the Rapture, which will occur when Jesus returns again in the clouds to gather his people to himself. First, those Christians who have already died, who have been living in an intermediate heaven in spiritual bodies, will be reunited with their physical bodies and taken up into the air to be with Jesus. After that, those Christians who are still alive on earth will be taken up into the air to be with him and will be given new physical bodies. This will all happen very quickly, “in the twinkling of an eye.” After seven years of tribulation, God will reign on the earth for a thousand years and then create a new heaven and a new earth for his children.

Donna: Isn't that the same thing Harold Camp predicted? He turned out to be wrong. How can we trust this prophecy?

Rick: Camp was unreliable. He was wrong about the date of Christ's return and was wrong about the duration of the tribulation period. But God's word *is* reliable. In Matthew 24:36-42, Jesus states that no one can predict the date when he will return. Even he didn't know the date:

But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

Donna: Jesus could come back at any time?

Rick: Yes. That means we need to be ready.

Donna: Why do we need to be ready?

Rick:

If Jesus came back tomorrow and you *were not* a Christian, you'd have to go through the terrible tribulation period in which there would be wars, famines, genocide, earthquakes, sulfur hailstorms, a massive meteor strike and many other calamities. There's a good chance you'd be killed and go straight to hell. The antichrist will set up a one-world government, deceive the world, and have it worship him instead of God. While there will be 144,000 Jewish evangelists, you might not get another chance to become a Christian if you are deceived into following the antichrist.

If Jesus came back tomorrow and you *were* a Christian, you'd miss all those terrible trials I described, and dwell in heaven with Jesus until he returned again seven years later to defeat his enemies, subdue the earth and rule over it.

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Donna: How can we be sure whether we're ready for Jesus' return or not?

Rick:

Romans 10:9 states, "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." When you accept God's free gift of eternal life, you become God's adopted son or daughter and will live with him forever.

As Christians, we need to be busy helping others get ready for the Lord's return, for this is the Lord's work for each of us. We demonstrate our love for God and others by doing this. If we follow Jesus, he sanctifies us and readies us for his service, and as we serve him, he gives us a joy that is beyond measure.

In John 15:9-12, Jesus said, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."

I encourage you to reach out and love one another during the coming week.