**THE HOUR IS COMING**

***Watching For Christ’s Return (#3)***

I’m a huge fan of old movie westerns. In fact the only TV I have bothered to watch is on Sunday night when I can finally relax after a week of working (yes, I know, the Lord rested on the seventh day, but I choose 7:00 to 10:00 pm on the first day, so I hereby repent in sackcloth and ashes). To unwind my tension I love an old John Wayne or James Stewart flick where I know that the good guy always wins. I have other favorites too, like Randolph Scott and Gary Cooper (but now I’m really dating myself).

Speaking of Gary Cooper have you ever watched the classic western *High Noon*? Filmed in the year I was born (1952) Cooper won the Academy Award’s Oscar for best actor for playing Sheriff Will Kane. The drama centered around the coming of the noon train when a man that Kane had sent to prison, and who had vowed to return to kill him, would step off the train for a showdown. The movie kept building the plot by constantly showing the large town clock that was steadily inching toward the sounding of the 12 bells when the train arrived. I won’t spoil it for you by giving you the climatic finish (I’ll bet you can never guess (;^).

What does this old western have to do with my subject? Just this. The gospel of John has an inspired script worthy of an Oscar. From the beginning of the book to its close we keep hearing about “*the hour*” of Christ’s coming death.

In John 2:4 Jesus reminds his impatient mother, “*Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me?* ***My hour*** *has not yet come*.”
Then in John 7:30 we hear *“Therefore they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because* ***His hour*** *had not yet come.”*
But then in John 12:23 we hear the plot is drawing to a climax: *“But Jesus answered them, saying, “****The hour*** *has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.”*You really feel the tension when Jesus says to His Father in John 12:27, *“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from* ***this hour’****? But for this purpose I came to* ***this hour****.”*The plot thickens as the clock ticks when Jesus prays in John 13:1, *​“Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that* ***His hour*** *had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”
​*You can almost see and hear the clock striking noon as He now prays, *“Father,* ***the hour*** *has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.”* (John 17:1).
Then the enemy draws their guns and fire as we read John 19:14, *“Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about* ***the sixth hour****. And he said to the Jews, “Behold your King!” But they cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!”*

Our hero, unlike the classic westerns, is killed. Scripts are not supposed to end with the hero dead! He lays buried in the tomb. One day passes. Two days. All hope seems lost. All the disciples either cower in fear or bawl their eyes out. The bad guys, the enemy, are ecstatic with joy. This is just not right. This is not how the plot is supposed to finish.

Spoiler alert. In what should go down as the greatest script ever written, the hero comes back to life! Mary Magdalene, another Mary, and Salome are the first witnesses to see the empty tomb. They are told by an angel, “*You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He is risen*!” (Mk. 16:6).

After spending 40 days in His post-resurrection life on earth He then gathers His apostles on a mountain, gives them final instructions, then miraculously ascends in the clouds back to heaven! Jesus wins! He now rules by the right hand of God as King of kings and Lord of lords.

For nearly 2,000 years disciples of Christ have anxiously awaited His return. In the movie *High Noon* you knew the exact moment the clock would strike, the train whistle would blow, the villains would step off the train and walk down the street to face a showdown with Sheriff Kane. But in this Biblical plot our curiosity screams to know when Jesus is coming back for us (John 14:1-3). But instead He leaves us only with this simple clue in John 5:28-29,

*Do not marvel at this; for* ***the hour is coming*** *in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*

The Hour is coming! We don’t know if that hour will be midnight or high noon. All we know is it ***IS*** coming. That’s all we need to know. It won’t be a secret rapture that leaves everyone in suspense (as premillennialist teach), but will be like this:
*“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God*” (I Thess. 4:16).

And it will be like this:
*“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him”* as He shouts for all to hear: *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End… who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”* (Rev. 1:7-8).

Did Gary Cooper (aka Sheriff Will Kane) outdraw and kill the four outlaws on Main Street in the dusty western town of Hadleyville, New Mexico at high noon? You’ll have to watch the movie to find out.

Did Jesus of Nazareth (aka Christ, Lord, Savior) face His hour of death and escape? No, He died… as planned from eternity. Thank God.

Did Jesus of Nazareth fulfill His repeated promise to “*rise from the dead on the third day*?” (Lk. 9:22; 13:32; 18:33; 24:7,21,46). Yes! Thank God.

Did Jesus of Nazareth return at “*the hour*” He promised to resurrect every soul from the grave? Not yet. Thank God. But He will. The drama and suspense hold our undivided attention, even more than a good old classic western. Jesus still says, “Ready or not, here I come.” Let’s be ready!

I love you. -Rick