

My View Of The End Times 5

Coming like a thief & watching

1 Thess. 5:2 tells us that *"the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night."* The popular understanding of *"come like a thief"* is that Jesus can return at any moment and surprise Christians. However, 1 Thess. 5:4 says, *"But you brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief"*. So, Christians won't be surprised by the coming of the Day Of The Lord but those who are *"in darkness"*, the unsaved, will be.

In Rev. 3:1-3, Jesus told the Sardis church, *"you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead [in sin]. Wake up! ... repent ... But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief and you will not know at what time I will come."* This confirms that it is the unsaved, those who are dead in the darkness of sin, who will be surprised when Jesus comes like a thief.

The unsaved make fun of the idea that Jesus will return and they mock God, saying, *"Where is this 'coming' he promised? ... everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation,"* and then a few verses later it says, *"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare"* (2 Pet. 3:4, 10).

So we can see that it is the unsaved who will be surprised by Jesus' return because they will be living life just like the people in the days of Noah. Matt. 24:38-39 tell us, *"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."* While Noah was aware of the coming disaster, the unrighteous were not. So, in the same way that the unrighteous were surprised, and destroyed by the flood, those who are unrighteous during the End Times will be surprised when Jesus returns to destroy them in the Day Of The Lord.

On the other hand, Christians will not be surprised because they will be watching and waiting for Jesus to Rapture them out of their great suffering. In Mark 13:20, Jesus said that the Lord would cut short the days of tribulation but He didn't say exactly when. In Mark 13:32-37, He said, *"No one knows about that day or hour ... Be on guard! Be alert! ... If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"* Jesus gives this strong warning because, during the Great Tribulation, there will be enormous deception so believers will need to watch carefully and not sleep.

Where Jesus says not to sleep, He doesn't mean it literally as we all must sleep. In 1 Thess. 5:5-6, we are told, *"You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness [of sin]. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep [in their sin], but let us be alert and self-controlled."* From this we see that sleeping is associated with sin, so, during the End Times, Christians must not *"sleep"* but be self-controlled and alert so as not to get caught up in sin.

Summing this up, Jesus will come like a thief and surprise the unsaved but Christians will be watching and waiting for Him. As already mentioned, during the Great Tribulation things will be very bad. In Matt. 24:10-13, Jesus said, *"At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."* So Christians will need to be alert and self-controlled, not sleeping, but watching so that they will not be hardened or deceived and turn away from the faith.

The next article will be on the Antichrist. Amen.

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