



Thoughts from First Thessalonians ...

Thief in the Night

There are certainly going to be many, many surprised people at Jesus' return. Billions of earth's residents may have heard something about Jesus, but have no concept whatsoever that He is returning, and that "in that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship" (Isaiah 2:20). Many know of the claims of scripture, but deny its truthfulness and scoff at the idea that the Lord will return. Others believe in the return of Christ, but have been confused by the obfuscators of the day and totally misunderstand the nature of His second coming. All these will be

surprised when they end up in the place that Jesus Himself described as a place of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12).

- **Christians are taught** — One of the core teachings connected with Christ is the uncertainty of the timing of His return. While on His earthy sojourn, He Himself clearly stated, "Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" (Matthew 24:36). Hence, as Paul continues his commentary on the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, he notes, "Now as to the times and epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you" (1 Thessalonians 5:1). But, Christians being Christians, and Paul's having had a lot of experience dealing with them, is going to write to them anyhow.

- **Day of the Lord** — The expression "the day of the Lord" appears in numerous places and in several contexts in the holy scriptures. Joel spoke of a day of the Lord as referring to the time when an enemy army would overwhelm the land. "Blow a trumpet in Zion," he prophesied, indicating that Jerusalem and Judah were in the crosshairs of the oncoming army, "and sound an alarm on My holy mountain. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the *day of the Lord* is coming; surely it is near" (Joel 2:1). Joel also spoke of the day of the Lord in connection with the "consummation of the ages,"

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the day of Jesus' ascension. "The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood," he again foretold, this time referring to the signs and wonders occurring in connection with Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, "before *the great and awesome day of the Lord* comes" (Joel 2:31, quoted by the apostle Peter in Acts 2:20). But there is a *day of the Lord* which comes like a thief in the night, and this is in reference to Jesus' second coming. "For you yourselves know full well," is Paul's reminder, "that *the day of the Lord* will come just like a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2). This, of course, refers to the day when "the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Peter also referred to the same day. "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief," noted the apostle, using the same type of language that Jesus Himself had used as He discussed the time of His second return, "in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). On that day, the physical universe ceases to exist. The day of judgment will take place, the unbelievers will be cast into the lake of fire, and saints of God will enter the glories of heaven. The saints may "have no need of anything to be written" to them. But they certainly need to be reminded repeatedly!

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