

Jesus Came as a Thief

Jesus stated in **Revelation 16:15**, that He was coming as a thief. Jesus also said **“Blessed is he that watcheth....”** Jesus linked his coming as a thief with the battle of that great day of God Almighty. (**Revelation 16:14**)

History tells us that this great battle happened in AD 70 of the first century. This is when the City of Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple were destroyed.

In **Revelation 1:1-3**, the Apostle John was told that the fulfillment of the Book of Revelation was **“at hand”** and must **“shortly come to pass”**. In **Revelation 22:12**, Jesus concludes the Book of Revelation with the same urgency with the words **“Behold, I come quickly”**

Every single reference to the coming of the Lord in the Book of Revelation is associated with **“imminence”**. This means that the **“thief coming”** of Jesus was near when John wrote the Book of Revelation.

Since every reference to the coming of the Lord in Revelation says it was near, we don't have to wonder about the context for the **“coming as a thief”**.

Remember, God would gather them together in a place called Armageddon. (**Revelation 16:14-16**) This was the place that the armies of Rome assembled to go and besiege the City of Jerusalem.

This would be the great day of God's wrath when He would avenge the saints and prophets persecuted by the great city called Babylon which was Jerusalem. This is when those slain for the Word of God and their faith would be vindicated. (**Revelation 6:9-10, 15-17**)

Jesus identified the time and location of the avenging of the blood of the martyrs. In **Matthew 23:34-36**, Jesus recounts Israel's bloody history of killing prophets and indicated that Jerusalem would also kill the prophets that He was about to send to her.

The great city was none other than first century Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified. (**Matthew 23:37-38, Revelation 11:8**) Jesus clearly identifies Old Covenant Jerusalem as the city guilty of persecuting the saints. This means that the Lord's coming against Jerusalem would be as a thief in **His generation**.

Remember, Jesus told His first century audience that there would actually be signs of His coming. Jesus lists some of these signs in **Matthew 24:4-16**. Compare these signs that Jesus listed in **Matthew 24** to the verses found in **Revelation 16:14-16**.

We see some of the same signs emerging with the phrase **“Behold, I come as a thief”**. Jesus coming as a thief was to be against Jerusalem.

This **“thief coming”** was imminent. This **“thief coming”** would be in vindication of the blood of martyrs and prophets. Jesus made it very clear that there would be definite signs of the **“thief coming”**.

In **Revelation 3:1-3**, the church in Sardis was told words about the **“thief coming”** of Jesus. Since the church of Sardis does not exist today, this would make it impossible to apply these verses to a coming of Jesus as a thief in our future.

Notice that the church in Sardis was told to watch; for His coming would be as a thief. Jesus also told that first century audience to watch because his coming would definitely be in **their generation**. (**Matthew 24:34, 42-43**)

They were told to watch for definite visible signs and events that would precede His soon Return. **Revelation 3** was addressed to the church in Sardis that existed back in the first century.

Matthews 24 was addressed directly to the Apostles about actual physical events that were getting ready to happen in their lifetime. In **Luke 21:26-36**, Jesus states that the judgment of Jerusalem would affect the entire Nation of Israel.

In **2 Peter 3:1-3**, the Apostle Peter was reminding his audience of the prophecies of the Old Covenant prophets and of the other Apostles. These scoffers were a sign of the impending Day of the Lord.

This is the setting of the statement Peter made in **2 Peter 3:10**. Peter had already confirmed on the Day of Pentecost that he and his contemporaries were already living in the last days.

In **Acts 2:15-17**, Peter quoted the promise of the prophet Joel being fulfilled. (**Joel 2:28**) Peter also proclaimed in **1 Peter 1:20** that Jesus had been revealed in the last times for them.

Now, let’s turn our attention to **1 Thessalonians 5:1-5**. A relevant and contextual question to ask is this: **“Upon whom would the coming of the Lord be as a thief?”**

The Apostle Paul gave us the answer to this question in **1 Thessalonians 5:3-5**.

Notice the distinction between **“them”** and **“you”**. The **“them”** was those who did not know and who did not believe because they were in darkness. They were unaware of the approaching return of Jesus; therefore, they were not watching.

Their cry was **“peace and safety”**. We can read about this same attitude in the days of Noah. The unbelievers in Noah’s day knew not until the flood came and took them all away. (**Matthew 24:37-39**) Their failure to believe led to their failure to watch.

The only way that this Day of the Lord would come as a thief would be if they were **NOT** watching.

The logical and contextual understanding of this “**watching**” is in connection with the signs that Jesus listed. The coming of the Lord as a thief that we read in **1 Thessalonians Chapter 5** is the same as the coming as a thief in **Matthew Chapter 24** and in **Luke Chapter 21**.

The context of all of these passages is pointing towards AD 70 of the first century. Paul told the Thessalonians that they would escape what was coming by simply being sober and watching. (**1 Thessalonians 5:4-6**)

The exhortation to watch implies the existence of visible signs. They knew this event was going to happen in their lifetime. (**1 Thessalonians 4:15-17**) This is why **THEY** were told to watch.

Paul told them that some of them would be alive and remain until the coming of the Lord. In **Luke 12:35-40**, we read the words of Jesus. Here, Jesus is admonishing the believers to watch for the return of their Lord.

The imagery of the lamps or lights burning refers to the candlesticks that had to be constantly attended to in order to prevent them from going out. This presents a positive statement of the imminence of the Return of Jesus.

We read in **1 Peter 1:5-7**, that Jesus was ready to be revealed. In **verse 13**, the Apostle Peter told **THEM** to hope for the grace that would be given **THEM** at the appearing of Jesus. In **1 Peter 4:7,17**, the Apostle Peter affirmed that the end was near. Jesus also stressed the ideas of watchfulness and imminence always stressing the expectation of His coming as a thief.

Jesus made it very clear that no man would know the exact day and hour of His Return. (**Matthew 24:36**) Jesus and the Apostles made the clear statement that the season of His coming was to be soon, near, and at hand.

Jesus revealed the timing of His return to be **IMMEDIATELY** after the tribulation of **those days**. (**Matthew 24:29-31**) In **John 16:13**, Jesus told the disciples that the Spirit would reveal things that were soon to come.

Conclusion

We read throughout the Gospels and the Epistles the warnings that Jesus and the Apostles gave to the first century believers to **WATCH**. These instructions of Jesus were very clear and concise. (**Matthew 24:42, 25:13, Mark 13:37**)

We have shown the Bible passages that predicted the coming of the Lord as a thief must be kept within a first century context.

Those who were not watching, were caught unawares of the approaching judgment of the Lord against the City of Jerusalem in AD 70 of the first century. They were not watching for all the signs that Jesus had given them.

To them, He came as a thief in the night. The Bible does **NOT** teach a yet future coming of the Lord as a thief at the so-called “**end of time**”.

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