

## AS A THIEF IN THE NIGHT? NOT FOR ME! : PART 1

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Within the Christian body today, there is a sharp division between those persons who believe that Christ will return unexpectedly at any moment, and those, like myself, who are convinced that before Jesus can return for his Elect Bride, certain Endtime events must transpire; events which, as of this writing, have not happened yet; at least not according to my understanding of the Sacred Scriptures. These events, which I discuss in other articles, include the signing of the seven-year Holy Covenant, the construction of the final Jewish Temple on Mount Moriah in East Jerusalem, and thus the re-institution of the Daily Sacrifice, also known as the morning and the evening oblation, the breaking of the Holy Covenant, the invasion of Jerusalem by the Beast and the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation, followed by the Mark of the Beast and the Great Tribulation, the plagues of the Two Sackcloth Witnesses, and finally, the Rapture of the Saints. While none of these important events have occurred yet, it does seem that their commencement is very close at hand.

The issue then, which I will be addressing in this article, is whether or not we are meant to understand the time of the Lord's Coming. In order to properly answer this question, as is my custom, I believe that the best approach to take, is to actually examine some of the verses which are commonly used to support the idea of Christ's unexpected Arrival. Let us begin by reading what the Apostle Paul wrote in his first Epistle to the Disciples at Thessalonica:

"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."  
1 Thessalonians 5:1-3, KJV

On the surface, these verses appear to support the idea of Christ returning as a thief in the night for the entire world; however, is that what they are really saying? The main clue in solving this mystery, is found in Paul's usage

of the word "they". It is obvious that Paul is writing this Epistle to the Christian brethren in Thessalonica; but who is the "they" to whom he is referring? Will the Christian brethren be the ones who will be saying "Peace and safety" in the Endtime? I don't believe so; at least not if they know the Scriptures. Are the Christians of the Endtime the ones upon whom will come sudden destruction so that they shall not escape? Again, I really doubt it. It is obvious to me then, that Paul must therefore be referring to someone else. I am convinced that, in a very general sense, he is referring to the people of the Endtime who have rejected the truth of God's Word. These are the ones who will walk in spiritual darkness; that is, they will lack understanding concerning Christ's Second Coming; but not those of us who have discerned the signs of the times. We will be expecting His eminent Return. Consider what the Lord said to the unbelieving Jews in the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew:

"The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"  
Matthew 16:1-3, KJV

The above verses clearly reveal that, even in Jesus' day, the hardhearted Jewish hierarchy simply did not possess the spiritual discernment to recognize Him as the Messiah. They were so Earthly and carnal in their thinking, that they were totally blinded to the truth. Jesus' message seemed like utter foolishness, and in fact, total blasphemy, to them. It is for this reason, that they demanded signs of Him; because they didn't have any real faith. As the Apostle Paul wrote:

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."  
1 Corinthians 2:14, KJV

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."  
1 Corinthians 1:18, KJV

Exactly who was it who had blinded them in this way? If we consider what Jesus said regarding who was the master of the Jewish Elders, and then look to several of Paul's Epistles, we can gain a very clear answer:

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."  
John 8:44, KJV

"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:"

Ephesians 2:2, KJV

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

2 Corinthians 4:4, KJV

Obviously then, it is Satan the adversary himself, the false god of this world, who since ages past, blinds the hearts, and dulls the minds of those who receive not the message of the Gospel, beginning with the Jews thousands of years ago. With this understanding, let us take another look now at what Paul wrote to the brethren at Thessalonica. If I may paraphrase here for a moment, what Paul is telling the brethren is "Look; I know I don't really need to be writing to you about these things, because I know that you already understand them." It is right after this, that he employs the use of that word "they". He is using it in order to show a sharp contrast between those who understand the events surrounding the Lord's Second Coming, and those who do not; that is, the non-believers; the people of the world; those who will be living in the Endtime during the Apostasy; during the "falling away"; from the Greek word "apostasia".

Not only that, but if you read the second chapter of Paul's second Epistle to the Thessalonians, in conjunction with my article "Who is Hindering the Antichrist?", you will quickly understand that Paul is primarily directing his words to the unbelieving Jews of the Endtime, who will fall under the strong delusion of their false messiah, Moshiach ben David, whom I currently believe will be the Antichrist, who will sit in the rebuilt Jewish Temple, feigning to be God.

It is because of their hardhearted unbelief, and because of their falling away from the truth, that sudden destruction will indeed come upon these Endtime mockers and deceivers; who will be eating and drinking, and marrying; just as it was in Noah's day before the Flood. Isn't this precisely what Jesus Himself, as well as the Apostles Peter and Paul, prophesied would happen as one of the signs of the Endtime? Consider the following verses:

"But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Matthew 24:37-39, KJV

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

2 Timothy 3:13, KJV

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation . . . But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent

heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

2 Peter 3:3-4, 10, KJV

Please notice that in both cases, Peter and Paul make a very clear link between the unbelievers and Endtime mockers, and the Lord coming as a thief in the night. Both Apostles are telling us the very same thing. They are both saying that it is upon them, that is, upon the ungodly unbelievers, that destruction will come. It is also upon them that the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night when they least expect it. Once again I am reminded of the prophetic Psalm Two:

"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

Psalms 2:1-12, KJV

Returning to Paul's first Epistle to the Thessalonians, in his letter, Paul is obviously writing about two different groups of people; that is, the believers and the reprobates. He is addressing his Epistle to the believing Church at Thessalonica, in order to tell them what will happen to the unbelievers of the Endtime; and not to the God-fearing, Bible-believing Christian brethren. In fact, if we read the very next verse, that is, verse four, Paul again makes a very clear, unmistakable contrast between the believing brethren, and the unbelievers of the world when he states:

"But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."

1 Thessalonians 5:4, KJV

It truly amazes me how some Christians are so quick to quote the first three verses from this chapter regarding the Day of the Lord arriving as a thief in the night, but then they completely ignore or disregard verse four, which totally contradicts what they are saying. Either they do it out of ignorance, not even knowing that the verse exists, because they depend upon some man to teach them God's Word, or else they do know of its existence, and purposely choose to ignore it, because it totally exposes the lie behind their belief and false doctrine. There is simply no way around this. Paul is clearly saying that we the believers are not in darkness! We know, or at least we will know in God's

chosen time, when Christ will be returning. So then, verses one through three of this chapter are talking about the unbelievers who will be caught by surprise; while verse four is referring to us; that is, to those Christians of the Endtime who will be watching and waiting patiently, while we faithfully continue to do our work for the Lord. As a matter of fact, please notice what the next few verses say after that. Paul is showing a further comparison between us and them:

"But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation."

1 Thessalonians 5:4-8, KJV

There is no need to try to interpret these verses, as their meaning is quite obvious. We are in the Light; we are the Children of Light; we know the truth of God's Word. I wrote an inspiring short article about this called "The Children Of Light: Are You One of Us?". I hope that you will find the time to read it. So the point is, they are the ones who will be in spiritual darkness; they are the ones who will be surprised; because they are the children of darkness who have fully rejected the spiritual light of the Scriptures, and in so doing, have rejected Christ Himself. As Jesus said in John chapter three:

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd."

John 3:19-20, KJV

The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness are as different as night and day, as water and oil, as bitter and sweet. This is why the Apostle Paul was inspired to write:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

2 Corinthians 6:14, KJV

We Christians will be patiently waiting for the Lord's Return, even as we are already doing now. Once some of the aforementioned events begin to transpire, we will be able to begin to mark off the days; exactly as I demonstrate in the "Last Seven Years Chart", as well as in such articles as the series "The Great Tribulation and the Rapture". Unbelieving people of the world will indeed be completely caught by surprise by the Second Coming of Christ; but not those of us who understand the prophetic events of the Endtime. This is exactly what this ministry is all about. Not only is it to bring people to Salvation, but it is also to help prepare our brethren for what lies ahead in the near future; in our lifetimes. As I clearly demonstrate in those other Endtime

articles, God wants us to understand. It is for this reason, that He has given us so many signs, such as those found in the prophecies of Daniel. The Prophet wrote in part:

"And they that understand among the people shall instruct many."  
Daniel 11:33, KJV

If we are wise, if we know the Word, then we will understand and be prepared, and not be taken by surprise like the rest of the unbelieving world. Not only will we understand, but as Daniel writes, we will be instructing others, and letting them know exactly what is happening. Are not some of us already doing this now? By God's grace, we will continue to do it as long as possible. That is why Satan will be out to get us; because we will be telling the world that his days are numbered; that the Antichrist's days are numbered; that the Beast's days are numbered; that the False Prophet's days are numbered; and that Babylon the Great Whore's days are numbered as well. Satan will be doing his very best to try to stop the mouths of God's Endtime children through his human puppets, but his, and their, destruction, is already certain. Allow me to remind you again of Peter's warning. He wrote:

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."  
2 Peter 3:10, KJV

In my view, the above verse sounds more like the destruction of the Old Earth and the Old Heavens, that is, our current ones, following the one-thousand-year Reign of Christ on Earth. In looking at the Book of Revelation, we know that following the Millennium, Satan will be released from the Bottomless Pit for a short season, in order to deceive the nations of the Earth one more time. As hard as it may be to believe, despite Christ's physical presence for one thousand years, the people of Earth will still rebel. We are then told that God will not waste any further time with them, and that He will simply send fire from Heaven to burn them all up:

"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them."  
Revelation 20:7-9, KJV

After these events, John then describes how Satan will be cast into the lake burning with fire and brimstone, the Great White Throne Judgment, the New Heaven and the New Earth, and finally, the Heavenly City, New Jerusalem, which will descend from God out of Heaven. These wonderful events are all discussed in more detail in other articles, such as in "From Armageddon to the New Earth". Now, if Peter is not referring to these post-Millennial events, then he may be

referring to a cleansing of the Earth's surface prior to the Lord beginning His Millennial Reign. Regardless of which time period Peter is referring to, we the Saints of God will already have our new bodies when these events transpire, so he can't possibly be talking about us being surprised as by a thief in the night. If anyone is going to be surprised, it will be the incorrigible enemies of God, when the Lord sends down the fire one last time, and destroys them all due to their final rebellion against Him!

To add further weight to the idea that the "thief in the night" scenario is a conditional event which is clearly related to the degree of belief or unbelief on the part of the participants, please consider also what the Spirit says to the church at Sardis in the Book of Revelation:

"Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."  
Revelation 3:3, KJV

Allow me to ask you; is the Lord definitely saying that they will not know when He is coming? No! He very explicitly says "If therefore thou shalt not watch". In other words, the Lord is saying "If you are watching, you will know when I am about to come; however, if you are not watching, if you are not keeping an eye on the signs of the Endtime, then I will surprise you like a thief in the night; just as I will with all of the unbelievers and mockers of the world." This very same thought is repeated thirteen chapters later where we read:

"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."  
Revelation 16:15, KJV

Again it becomes very apparent, that if we are watching and waiting soberly, watching the final events of the Endtime be fulfilled, and counting off the days, we will not be caught naked or ashamed. We will not be like the foolish virgins who let their oil run out. The Lord's mention of "keepeth his garments" is something I have spoken about in a few other articles, such as in the series "Once Upon a Time: A True Story". It is the same wedding garment which Jesus was referring to in His Parable of the Marriage Feast. It is the Garment of Righteousness which we all receive when we accept and believe in Christ, and allow Him to wash us clean with His Sacrificial Blood. This is the only way in which any of us can enter the Marriage Feast of the Lamb:

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."  
Matthew 22:11-13, KJV

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the

marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God."  
Revelation 19:7-9, KJV

While I have now clearly demonstrated how some people have erroneously misinterpreted the "thief in the night" verses, there are other popular verses which are often used by those who claim that we will not know when Jesus is going to arrive. These verses include the following:

"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only . . . Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come . . . Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh . . . Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."  
Matthew 24:34-36, 42, 44, 25:13, KJV

At the beginning of Matthew chapter twenty-four, the Lord's Disciples asked Him regarding what signs will precede the End of the World, and His Coming; thus, from reading the entire chapter, we know that in the above verses, Jesus is referring to the generation which will see and experience all of the signs which He describes for His Disciples in that chapter. These signs and Endtime markers include such things as severe earthquakes, widespread famine, wars and rumors of war, family betrayals, persecution against the Christians, the preaching of the Gospel in the whole world, etc. It is after He has described these Endtime signs, which He clearly ties into the prophecies of Daniel concerning the Jewish Holy Covenant, the Abomination of Desolation and the Seventieth Week, that the Lord makes the above remarks. Now, let me ask you; why would Jesus describe all of these very specific signs, and then state that no one will know when He will return, except for His Father in Heaven? Does that make any sense to you? Doesn't it seem a little contradictory to say, "All of these things are going to happen, but you still aren't going to know"? What is the purpose of giving the signs then?

Obviously, there must be some misunderstanding with how the previous verses have been interpreted by certain modern Christians. It would be like me prophetically saying, "There is going to be a terrible two-car accident just twenty miles ahead of you, at the intersection of routes five and ten, at exactly 5:00 P.M., between a red pick-up truck and a blue convertible"; and then tell you, "But you are not going to know when or where it is going to happen, so watch out!". Now doesn't that sound silly? Didn't I just provide you with all of the important details so that you can make sure that you will avoid the accident by watching for the signs I gave to you?

In a similar manner, in Matthew chapter twenty-four, Jesus



has laid out a prophetic roadmap of the future; not so that we can avoid something, but rather so that we can make sure that we are watching and ready for His Return; and I believe that this is the key to understanding what He really meant by the previous verses. I believe that it is safe to assume that, given how much time has transpired since the Lord spoke those prophecies, that He obviously was not directing them to His immediate Disciples; or to anyone else who lived during that generation for that matter. In fact, they were only directed to the final generation which would be living at the time of His Second Coming; that is, to we His Endtime Disciples, who would understand and experience the Endtime signs He described in that chapter. For this reason alone, the Christians of the First Century didn't have to know. They didn't have to understand. Even the angels didn't have to know or understand. What point would there be in it? How could they possibly profit by it? They couldn't; but we most certainly can!

So in my mind, the true spirit, the true emphasis of the above verses is "Watch and be ready. If you aren't watching for the signs I have just described for you, then yes, you will be in spiritual darkness, and you won't know when I am going to return. I will come as a thief in the night for you, just as I will for the unbelieving people of the world; just as the Flood unexpectedly came upon the unbelievers and mockers of Noah's day and destroyed them all". This attitude of "watch and be ready" is something we should all have every single day of our lives; after all, although it is true that the Lord will finally come on a certain day, it doesn't necessarily mean that we will each still be alive at that time. You could die tomorrow! Consider the following verses:

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."  
James 4:14, KJV

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"  
Hebrews 9:27, KJV

"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"  
Luke 12:20, KJV

If death were to suddenly come upon you, would you be ready? Are you currently doing what you believe the Lord wants you to be doing with your life; or are you putting it off for some future time when maybe you will be more in the mood, or perhaps more desperate for God's help? As I explain in other articles, procrastination is one of Satan's biggest tricks. If he can just convince you to keep delaying your personal Salvation for another day, that day will never come; and you will die in your sins, without Christ, without forgiveness, and without Salvation. The time of your Salvation is now!:

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

Romans 13:11, KJV

"(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)"  
2 Corinthians 6:2, KJV

If there is one thing of which I am certain, it is that the Bible does not contradict itself. I have explained before that if there is any confusion on our part, it is more often than not in our personal understanding of the Scriptures. The only way to bring Scriptural harmony between Paul's words, when he states that we are not in darkness so that the Day of the Lord should overtake us a thief, and Jesus's words regarding no one knowing, is to accept my explanation, that what Jesus really meant, is that we will not know if we are not paying any attention to the signs of the Endtime. There is simply no other logical explanation as to why Jesus would provide these signs, unless He really did want us to know; and thus make sure that we are prepared for His Arrival.

Allow me to propose another rather interesting thought. What if the Lord hadn't emphasized to His Disciples that He might return at any moment? Do you think that they would have done as thorough of a job of spreading the Gospel as they did? Probably not. As I explain in other articles, in the Book of Acts, we discover that it took some serious persecution to finally get them out of Jerusalem and into all the world; and thank God that they did; otherwise, you and I might have never heard of the Saving Grace of Jesus Christ! In the following Parable concerning the lord who went away for a wedding, Jesus again emphasizes that the best way that we can be ready for Him when He returns, is by faithfully doing what we know we are supposed to be doing; in other words, by keeping ourselves busy doing the Lord's Work of preaching the Gospel to the lost in whatever way we can. We are constantly to be in a state of mental and spiritual preparedness. We cannot and should not deceive ourselves into thinking that the Lord delayeth His Coming:

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in

his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." Luke 12:35-47, KJV

In the final half of this article, we will be taking a look at such topics as Peter's backslidden state and the Lord's gentle rebuke, not being slothful in the Lord's business, the apostasy and compromise of the First Century Church, balancing scripture with scripture, does Jesus know, the weakness of the Holy Trinity doctrine, the purpose of Parables, God as a Revealer of secrets, and the apostasy of the Endtime. I trust that you will join me.

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AS A THIEF IN THE NIGHT? NOT FOR ME! : PART 2

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Backslidden Peter And The Lord's Rebuke, Not Slothful In the Lord's Business, First Century Apostasy And Early Church Compromise, Balance Scripture With Scripture, Does Jesus Know?, Weakness Of Holy Trinity, Parables For The Ignorant, Revealer Of Secrets, Endtime Apostasy, Closing Remarks

In thinking about all of this, it has occurred to me that perhaps there might be yet another reason why Jesus was so secretive concerning His Second Coming. Think about this: How would Jesus' first Disciples have felt had they known that He wasn't going to return in their lifetimes? Would it have encouraged their faith very much? Of course not. As it was, even after everything had transpired, even after Jesus had been raised from the dead and appeared before the Disciples on two occasions, they were still slow to believe. In fact, in the beginning of John chapter twenty-one, we already find them in a spiritually backslidden state. Jesus is gone; they haven't received the Holy Spirit yet; and the Jews are persecuting them; so they don't know what else to do except to return to their old jobs as fishermen:

"Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing." John 21:3, KJV

Peter, the leader of the group, backslid, and everyone else followed his poor example. In fact, the Disciples were so backslidden in their hearts, that the Lord didn't even bless their fishing trip all that night; at least not until Jesus arrived on the scene the following morning. Then we are told that they caught one hundred and fifty-three fish, and yet the net was not broken:

"But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken."

John 21:4-11, KJV

Perhaps there was a clear lesson to be learned here; and that is that He had called them to be fishers of men, and not fishers of fish. Perhaps the Lord chose to emphasize this point for them by having a fire ready, and fish already cooking, along with some bread, when they arrived on shore, thus highlighting the futility of their all-night labor. It appears that Peter may have been so embarrassed because of the fact that he had led the other Disciples astray, that he immediately jumped into the water. You may recall that Jesus had personally appointed Peter as the leader of the clan; and had even told him that his backsliding would serve to strengthen his faith; and I would add, to make him a more humble, obedient servant of the Lord, who depended upon God's strength and wisdom, and not upon his own:

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me."

Luke 22:31-34, KJV

While some people have suggested that Peter jumped into the water because he was so excited, and ran, or swam, to go see the Lord, read together, the above verses seem to tell a different story in my mind. Remember, Peter had only denied the Lord a few days earlier; and here he was caught in the very act of leading everyone astray. I believe that this may also be why the Lord tested Peter after they had dined. As

you may recall, just as Peter had denied knowing the Lord three times, Jesus now questioned him three times as to whether or not he loved Him:

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me."  
John 21:15-19, KJV

Returning to our main theme, it seems to me that by being somewhat secretive about His Second Coming, that is, by not revealing to His followers that He would not be returning in their lifetimes, and by emphasizing their need to always be watchful, and to always be prepared, the Lord was in fact giving the Early Church the impetus that it needed, in order to fulfill the mission that He had given it to do. To help you to understand this concept a little better, consider a situation in our modern day where a wise boss never lets his employees know when he might walk into the office or work area, in order to see how the work is progressing. Under such conditions, the employees will always be on the alert, and will make sure that they are properly doing what they are supposed to be doing, and not wasting time, or the boss' money, by being slothful in business. The Apostle Paul taught the very same concept to the First Century Christians when he wrote:

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;"  
Romans 12:11, KJV

Lest you misunderstand this verse, Paul was not talking about worldly businesses or secular jobs; he was talking about faithfully serving the Lord, as the end of the verse clearly states. I also discuss this same topic in such articles as "Money-Making Bible Hucksters and Mammon". Despite this wise tactic employed by the Lord, as we know from the Bible, as well as from secular history, the First Century hadn't even ended yet before the Early Church had already begun to cool off and lose the Heavenly Vision, and the Spiritual Fire which had been poured out on the Day Of Pentecost some fifty or sixty years before. If one reads the first few chapters of the Book of Revelation, it is easy to see the Lord's warnings to the various Churches which were in existence in Asia Minor, or modern-day Turkey, at that time; some of which had been founded by the Apostle Paul and his fellow companions in travel. Consider these revelatory verses which clearly demonstrate the rampant apostasy which

had already taken root in the Church during that time:

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."  
Revelation 2:4-5, KJV

"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."  
Revelation 2:14-16, KJV

"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."  
Revelation 2:20-23, KJV

"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."  
Revelation 3:1-3, KJV

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."  
Revelation 3:15-19, KJV

Eventually, the Early Church compromised to such a degree in the doctrines of the faith, that it moved out of the Roman coliseums, where the Christians had been torn apart by lions because of their faith, and into the grandstands; where it

became a spectator religion, when it was assimilated into the Roman Empire during the reign of Emperor Constantine. Thus began the history of the modern Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church some three hundred years after Christ's Resurrection. It was also at that time that the Scriptures fell under the control of these compromising religionists, and their interpretation of the same.

What I would like to emphasize here again, is that if one just takes one, or even a few verses I have quoted in this article, while ignoring the rest, he will be left with the erroneous idea that we are not to know when the Lord will be returning. As I explain in the article "Rightly Divide the Word of Truth", this is the problem with those people who don't follow the Apostle Paul's advice, by failing to properly balance the Word of Truth, by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Such people take just a few verses which support their ideas, and make a doctrine out of it. This is wrong, wrong, wrong! We must consider the full counsel of God's Word in order to arrive at Spirit-led conclusions. As Paul wrote:

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."  
2 Timothy 2:15, KJV

To reiterate then, if we consider all of the verses I have shared in this article thus far, we begin to acquire a completely different picture. We see that Jesus will only arrive as a thief in the night for those people of the Endtime who are not watching for the signs; either due to their unbelief, or possibly because of their slothfulness, or perhaps due to their ignorance of the Holy Scriptures. In any case, they are not in a state of preparedness. Some people have even gone so far as to suggest that perhaps Jesus Himself did not, or does not, know the Day of His own Second Coming. While He may not have known at that time, being as perhaps the Father hadn't told Him yet, due to His unique status with the Father, I would think that He knows now, since the time is evidently drawing very near. Many Christians the world over have sensed this in the Spirit. Consider these verses:

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."  
Mark 13:32-37, KJV

"All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."  
Matthew 11:27, KJV

The above verses from Mark are also useful for refuting the belief held by those people who insist that the so-called "Holy Trinity" is three beings wrapped up in one. If this is indeed the case, which I do not accept, how then can the Father know of His Son's appointed Day of Return, while the Son does not? In other words, if they are one being as these people suggest, how can He possibly hide something from Himself? For this and other reasons, in my mind, there is simply too much confusion in the trinity doctrine; at least as it is taught by some churches like the Roman Catholic Church.

The previous verse from the Gospel of Matthew is also quite interesting when we apply it to the Lord's Second Coming. Just as Jesus hid the true meanings of His Parables from His enemies but revealed them to His Disciples, might it not also be that He will reveal the Day of His Second Coming to us, the believers, through the many prophecies found in the Bible, as well as through the signs we see being fulfilled before us? While the world at large will be in spiritual darkness and caught off guard due to disbelief, could it be that the Lord will reveal more and more to us as that Great Day of His Arrival approaches? Consider these verses:

"And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."  
Matthew 13:10-13, KJV

"Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."  
Amos 3:7, KJV

While technically-speaking we are not Prophets, we are His children; we are of the Light; and thus I feel that we can apply the previous verse to ourselves. Considering this, and the many other verses I have shared in this article, I find it difficult to believe that we, God's Endtime children, upon whom the ends of the world are come, are not meant to know the Day of the Lord's Second Coming. If anything, as the days grow darker and darker ahead, I believe that the Lord will want to encourage our faith, and to motivate us to keep holding on a little longer, through revealing more and more truth to us. While we may not know the exact day now, and much less the hour of our Lord's triumphant Return, this does not mean that we will not know sometime in the near future when the final Endtime events begin to be fulfilled in the Middle East. I remain convinced that only those who have rejected God's truth as it is revealed in the Bible, will be caught off guard, and will not be expecting the Lord's Return. As the Apostle Paul tells us in his second Epistle to the Thessalonians:

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;"



## 2 Thessalonians 2:3, KJV

This "falling away" is the Apostasy I referred to earlier in this article. To any honest Christian, it is clearly the time in which we are now living; and it will only get worse as man continues to put more faith in his science, in his own wisdom, in his own forms of government, in his own abilities to solve his problems, and less faith in God his Creator. Let me remind you again that both Jesus and Peter hinted at how bad the situation will be just prior to the Lord's Arrival when they said:

". . . Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"  
Luke 18:8b, KJV

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."  
2 Peter 3:3-4, KJV

In conclusion, it is to these scoffers and unbelievers to whom Jesus will suddenly appear as a thief in the night, and not to those of us who have been soberly and carefully counting off the days according to the prophecies of Daniel and the Book of Revelation. It is these unbelievers who will experience sudden destruction as predicted by Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians. In His Divine Mercy, the Lord has seen fit to provide us with many, many signs so that we would know when He was about to return. The Bible is full of them. If anyone is ignorant of these signs, it is either because he wants to be, or else because he has not yet been fully instructed in the Word of God.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached for several thousands of years now, and it continues to be preached in many different forms and by many different methods. Everyone will be given a chance to hear and know the truth. It is those who reject it through rebellion and unbelief, who will be caught by surprise at the Lord's Return. They will be cast into outer darkness, and there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. What about you? Are you ready? You are if you have accepted the Lord into your life, and are busy serving Him faithfully. He's coming soon; so:

". . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."  
Revelation 2:10b, KJV

I trust that this article has been a blessing, and an inspiration in your life. Keep your eyes on Jesus; it won't be long; and remember:

"But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."  
1 Thessalonians 5:4, KJV

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