

LIKE A THIEF

I feel like this episode is necessary before we go to the Church at Sardis episode.

Rev 3:3

Just like when the Pergamum episode referred to Balaam, it brought in all the meaning behind Balaam's sin. And when the Thyatira message mentioned Jezebel, it brought it everything she epitomized. So, now we need to make sure we understand the bigger meaning of the phrase "like a thief" that has been established in the Word of God.

Matt 24:42-44. This is a parable comparing his coming to a thief. The point being that a thief does not tell you when he is coming. Jesus is emphasizing the unexpected day and hour. It will be unexpected unless you are prepared and watching.

Many pretrib believers would think this is consistent with their belief called "imminence". "Imminence" is the doctrine that Jesus Christ could come anytime now with no prior signs. The idea is that all the prophecies are fulfilled during the final 7 years and the rapture occurs before the final 7 years and before the signs. In this context there are many prior signs he tells his followers to look for.

He is answering, "what will be the sign of your **coming [parousia]**. The parousia is the I Thess 4 rapture or gathering together.

- As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your **coming** and of the end of the age?" Matthew 24:3
- For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the **coming** of the Son of Man. Matthew 24:27
- For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the **coming** of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 1 Thessalonians 4:15

This is covered a great deal in the End Times Course page on the FF website. Episodes 11, 17 & 19 explain this in more detail.

Matt 24:32-33. Everyone knows the signs that a fig tree will have fruit. It's not anytime. It is "when you see *all these things*", all the signs set out in this chapter.

But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.' Matthew 24:36

They, as the leaders of the church, and we, because we have this revelation, will know when the time is right, but that still doesn't tell the exact day or hour.

Matt 24:38-41. Those disciples listening would have understood these examples so well... Noah, people working and living life, one taken and one left. They would have understood about a servant continuing to do their duty when the master is away vs. a wicked servant who ignores the master's instruction. They would tell these examples as they spread the

gospel and new believers who were illiterate or did not have their own copy of the scriptures could understand and remember it.

Matthew 24 Timeline

- False Christs, false teachers, deception, betrayal and apostasy
- Wars, earthquakes, nation against nation, first 4 seals, beginning of birth pangs
- Abomination of desolation in the middle of the 70th week
- Great tribulation, persecution such as never before (5th seal)
- Cosmic signs of sun, moon and stars (6th seal)
- Jesus Christ appears so everyone sees. Clouds, trumpet, angels
- Angels gather the elect. Not just from Israel, but from the four winds.

Matt 24:27-31. This is what happens suddenly, unexpectedly. Like a thief in the sense that they didn't know what hour of the night it was coming. Obviously, we can see it is not like a thief in the sense that the believers will be secretly stolen away from the earth. If you want to use the like a thief saying to prove a secret rapture, that falls apart because it is talking about something every eye shall see.

If you think “like a thief” means imminence, that the rapture is before the final 7-year and could happen any time with no prior signs—that does not work here because there is a whole sequence of prior events. If you believe, as I do, that the rapture is pre-wrath (i.e. after the 6th seal, before the 7th seal, which is the wrath of God) then this is a message for the body of Christ.

The point of the saying “come like a thief” is what. Unexpected timing.

The action we are supposed to take. Watch

What are we not supposed to do? Live like it doesn't matter if we are watching. Drinking with drunkards, abusing others in the household of God.

I Thess. 5 also uses the phrase “like a thief”. Right after the description of the rapture in I Thess 4. Paul says they know perfectly well so that he doesn't even need to write about it. They must have known those examples from Jesus's Matt 24 teaching. This also tells us that the Day of the LORD (DL) comes like a thief in the night. This is consistent with the pre-wrath teaching that at the 6th seal, the rapture happens and that introduces the Day of the LORD, the wrath, which is the 7th seal. Finish Faithful Episode 7 is on the DL. Episode 19 is about I Thess 4&5. The prophets describe the DL as being like birth pains. Jer 30:6-9, Isa 13:6-10. Then it says to watch and not be drunk, which is the exact same message as Jesus spoke in Matt 24:42-51.

2 Peter 3:10 also says the DL will come like a thief. The cosmic catastrophes described are much like the 6th seal description in Rev 6:12-17. Remember that we should not try to understand these as scientific descriptions. They are visions that John and Peter would be compatible with their understanding of cosmology. Many scripture link the stars with

heavenly beings. They are describing disruptions to the light of the sun, moon and stars and the falling of some heavenly powers.

Conclusion on what does “like a thief” signify

- Not imminence where the rapture could happen any day now with no prior signs
- Within the progression of “all these things” in Matt 24
- Believers watching will know it is coming and have great reward
- Those not watching will be taken in by the deception of the antichrist or just lulled into worldliness

(“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed! Rev. 16:15

Those who are not awake to the signs and watching will be ashamed.