

A Thief In The Night By Pastor Jeff Wickwire

Matthew 24: 36-44; Revelation 16:15; 2 Peter 3:10; Luke 12:38; Genesis 6:5, 11; Romans 2:15; Luke 21:34

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Bible Verse

Matthew 24:36-44 (NIV)

³⁶“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

³⁷As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

³⁸For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;

³⁹and 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.

⁴⁰Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.

⁴¹Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

⁴²“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

⁴³But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.

⁴⁴So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

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Note

Four times in the NT the return of Jesus is likened to a thief in the night—2 times by Jesus himself, once by Paul and once by Peter. Aside from what we just read in Matthew, Jesus said in the book of Revelation.

Bible Verse

Revelation 16:15 (NIV)

¹⁵“Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed.”

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Note

Paul the Apostle writes to the Thessalonians,

Bible Verse

¹ Thessalonians 5:2 (NIV)

²for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

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Note

Peter also writes,

Bible Verse

² Peter 3:10 (NIV)

¹⁰But 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 done in it will be laid bare.

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Note

Now, in our text we read the words of Jesus saying,

Bible Verse

Matthew 24:43 (NIV)

⁴³But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.

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Note

Jesus' reference to a "watch" referred to how both the Jews and the Romans divided the night into military watches instead of hours, with each watch representing the time period that sentinels or soldiers remained on duty.

There were four night-watches of three hours each.

- First was evening watch, from 6 to 9 P.M.
- Second was midnight watch, from 9 to 12 P.M.
- Third was rooster crow, from 12 to 3 A.M.
- Fourth was morning watch, from 3 to 6 A.M.

Interestingly, in Luke's account of Jesus' parable, Jesus specifies

Bible Verse

Luke 12:38 (NIV)

³⁸It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak.

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Note

So the Bible is very clear that the return of Christ will be like a thief coming in the dead of night while the world is spiritually asleep. So let's talk about a thief's MO.... A thief is subtle, quiet, stealth-like, and his approach is unexpected. He does not announce his coming—his whole intent is to get in and get out without anyone knowing.

Jesus's return will be the same way! It will be sudden, silent, unexpected, and under the radar of most people. He will come quickly and quietly, snatch His church off of the earth and take us home. It will happen without warning:

As we read,

Bible Verse

Matthew 24:40-41 (NIV)

⁴⁰Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.

⁴¹Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

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Note

And here is a key sign Jesus gave us to look for: He said it will be just like it was in the days of Noah:

Bible Verse

Matthew 24:38-39 (NIV)

³⁸For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;

³⁹and 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.

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Note

They were just doing life in Noah's day. Getting married, eating and drinking, buying and selling, growing crops, building houses.

Yet we note that Jesus makes no mention of God in their life—God was out of the picture! They were doing life as usual, but it was a GODLESS LIFE—God had no place in their lifestyles or even in their thinking. Genesis 6 expands on this and tells us that the days of Noah were very wicked.

Let's look at it and see how the days of Noah measure up to our day, our culture, and our world: First, we see that:

1. 1. Noah's day witnessed universal MORAL COLLAPSE

Note

In Noah's day, a complete moral collapse had occurred. Man's fallen nature was on full display. While they didn't yet have the Bible, God had written his moral code on their conscience.

Bible Verse

Romans 2:15 (NIV)

¹⁵They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.)

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Note

God's laws are written within them;"This is saying that even without God's written Word, we intuitively know God's law based on the fact that we were created in His image.

And in Noah's day they threw their conscience aside and it says,

Bible Verse

Genesis 6:5 (NIV)

⁵The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.

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Note

And has not our society and the rest of the world done the same thing? We've rejected God's moral law and gone our own way. Yet unlike Noah's time, we have 66 books of God's Word, complete with all of His moral teaching, and have rejected it.

- For example, we've placed our seal of approval on homosexuality and perversion, which God's Word calls an abomination.

- We've allowed and sanctioned the grossest forms of pornography to flood our nation, poisoning the minds of our children and destroying the moral fabric and glue our nation was built on.
- We've done what no other culture in history has ever done and sanctioned same-sex marriage.
- We've murdered over 50 million babies with government approval.
- We've mocked Christians that believe in sexual purity.

Just like in Noah's day we've experienced a total moral collapse in spite of far greater divine revelation than Noah ever had.

Second, in Noah's time universal moral collapse led to...

2. Deep, systemic CORRUPTION

Note

The Bible says,

Bible Verse

Genesis 6:11 (NIV)

¹¹Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence.

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Note

The people of Noah's day had become entirely depraved by sin. They reached a place they could go no deeper into their iniquity. Like an ugly plant growing up out of the ground to finally fully bloom in all its loathsomeness, so was the corruption of Noah's day!

And finally, universal moral collapse and deep corruption led to:

3. Widespread VIOLENCE

Bible Verse

Genesis 6:11 (NIV)

¹¹Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence.

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Note

You see, when a society loses its morality and kills its conscience, violence always erupts as the final consequence. Are we not seeing this on our streets today? When a nation rejects divine revelation as we have, several dominoes begin to fall:

- *God given checks and balances disappear.
- *Natural affection is replaced with hard, unmerciful hearts.
- *Divine restraint is lifted.
- *Hatred of authority flourishes.
- *Respect for life vanishes.
- *Man is left to himself, and his fallen, godless nature goes on full display.

That's what we're witnessing right now in America! Having forgotten God, our nation is unraveling. Moral and civil anarchy like we're witnessing are ALWAYS the final consequence of a nation that forgets God.

We note that in Noah's day, widespread violence was the final straw with God. At this juncture, God tapped Noah with a boat building assignment.

Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be..."

You say, "Jeff, what do we do?"

The ONLY answer to what we're witnessing is the gospel of Jesus Christ preached with power in every city, town, and neighborhood. For it IS the power of God unto salvation! There have been terrible times like these in history where Satan was shut down by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ preached by Christians on fire for God! My prayer is that the church will boldly rise up, stand up, and speak up! In the meantime, these things are a sign that the return of Christ is near, and He will soon come like A THIEF IN THE NIGHT!