

## **Will Jesus come back like a thief in the night?**

The Bible translations usually proclaim the coming of Jesus this way, namely that it will come upon us “as a thief in the night”, alternatively “as a thief”. In other words, we will, in accordance with the Rev. 3.3 citation, not know when the day of the Lord will materialize. It will then take place so unexpectedly that it will surely catch us unawares and so that we will not know the exact hour of the break-in and just as a thief would go about, carrying out his plan of action secretly.

There is, however, a complaint that the phrase, “as a thief in the night”, added to the relevant citation, did not appear in the apostle John's original manuscript and that it then must have found its way via a scribal note into the text and because it was added to Scripture this way, its validity must be doubted. It must, in other words, be discarded, leaving only the bare basic text, “...I will come”, and which of course would change its meaning completely as “I will come” can indeed be interpreted in diverse ways. What it also mainly boils down to, is that Jesus' return will be all but “as a thief” and that it will then not come stealthily and unexpectedly upon us. We may even as it seems know the exact timing. However, what usually happens with this type of textual “discovery”, is that people begin to doubt the credibility of the Scriptures and for this very reason, we must always try to approach the text objectively.

Should we, however, analyze the text discarding “as a thief”, therefore interpreting it as it was seemingly then originally applied by the author (John), we may also reason that “I will come”, i.e. in cross-reference, indeed correlates well with 2 Pet. 3.10: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.” Here, in accordance with the Apostle Peter's letter, we do have the missing portion the scribe who was responsible for the insertion of the marginal note, must then have added and obviously for very good reasons.

This type of addition or “interpolation” is then not in the least wrong for the “day of the Lord” was always regarded by Jesus' followers as imminent. It was then something especially the first-century Christians were always eagerly looking forward to. It was also interpreted by them as the prophetic word would Biblically have been applied by them, namely as having been fulfilled from the minute it has gone forth. The prophetic word, flowing from the lips of a truly anointed, e.g. as the Apostle Peter indeed was, was then to them so steadfast, that it was never to be doubted. And this of course requires faith, something that was always applied to prophecy (1 Cor. 14.22).

Should we study the Old Testament prophets, we will sometimes see how one prophet will substantiate the word of another prophet and especially when salient events are still pending. This reiteration, i.e. confirming a truth revealed (=God's spoken, prophetic Word that will not return to Him void, in other words He will surely bring into fulfillment what He has said). God is then, in his dealings with man, indeed applying this type of method in order to imprint a profound, outstanding truth.

This type of work method of God was of course well known among the early Christians who were trained by the Apostles of Jesus in Old Testament (Jewish) practice. Besides, the Old Testament confirmed faith in the same God who had sent His Son (the Messiah) into the world (1 Jn 4; Jn 1; Gal.4). There is then indeed both continuity and consistency in God and especially relating to the prophetic word which was regarded as the lamp shining in the dark of night (2 Pet. 1.19-21)

What we therefore can gather from Rev. 3.3 (with reference to the addition of a scribal note), is something that does not alter the apostolic message in the least – brief changes also point to early copying/changes made (=clarifying the original without changing its real meaning, also sometimes

in translation improving the phraseology). Scribal notes were then marginal notes and which often had later become part and parcel of the text – luckily pointed out to us by modern-day textual fundi's as such.

Now, should we objectify the relevant text, we will see that the Apostle John who was responsible for the Apocalypse (Rev. 3.3) was clearly pointing to something that neatly gels with the Apostle Peter's expectations, the difference only lying in (1) Peter's statement made, namely declaring the Christians' faith in Jesus' imminent return (expectant and as a pregnant woman would be looking forward to the birth of her child), and (2) the Apostle John's direct prophetic word as he had received it from Jesus.

Therefore (1) confirming the prophetic word which was clearly actively applied in the first-century gatherings (1 Thes. 5.19-20) and (2) bringing directly the prophetic word as it was received by John on Patmos. "I will come" would then indeed have been understood by the early Christians as "I will come soon" yet not only soon, but because the date of the return of Jesus was not revealed to them and which is something that was then kept a secret by God the Father, the disciples would of course have visualized it in accordance with Peter's message, namely that it would be "as a thief" striking in the dark of night (Math. 24.36, Mr 13.32, Acts 1.7).

We do, however, also know that the early Christians' faith in the speedy return of Jesus – that it would happen in their day and age – was properly addressed by, e.g. Peter (2 Pet. 3; see also Lu. 12.45; Math. 24.48 – Jesus' prophetic word clearly speaks of interim happenings that were due to take place before His return and which were then still outstanding at the time).

What also should be clear to an observant reader of this type of New Testament text, is that there was clearly a strong bond of unity shining through the apostolic teachings. Peter's teachings would then, at the time the scribal note was added to John's Apocalypse, have aligned well with John's. Their word was therefore believed coming forth "from one mouth", again a salient first-century apostolic directive. And this is then something Jesus must have had in mind and when He had drawn His apostles' attention to Math. 18.16 : "From the mouth of two and three witnesses every word shall stand". On top of it, Paul's teachings correlate one hundred percent with those of John and Peter : (1 Thes. 5.1-2: "Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well (!) that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." The return of Jesus "as a thief at night" was then clearly a general, first-century apostolic confession of faith.

However, what is so remarkable to take note of is indeed the Apostle Paul's further statement, giving us good reason to, at this point in time, also EXPECTANTLY await the second coming of Jesus on the clouds of heaven: (1 Thes. 5.3 : "While people are saying, 'Peace and safety' destruction will come on them suddenly (!), as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape".

This is then indeed the time for the fulfillment of Paul's prophetic word! Therefore, don't be left in the dark any longer and although nobody is able to pinpoint the exact date of the return of Jesus, we are surely able to observe the signs for, in accordance with a true prophetic word that had gone forth in as far as I can recall, in 1984/85\* "...the nations will enter into a peace treaty but it will not last long...." They will then depend on their own accomplishment of peace yet what they in the end will have gained, will definitely not last for a sudden (!) destruction will overtake the inhabitants of the earth. Let us therefore watch and pray, keeping our spiritual garments clean (Rev. 14).

So all you and I have then to do, as followers of Jesus, is to expectantly await the day of Jesus' return for the mere fact that we cannot diarize the day one hundred percent must alert us all the more stronger to its sudden, unexpected fulfillment! (See Paul on the Second Coming of Jesus, 1

Thes. 5.13+). Yes, we may speculate on the return date but we cannot pinpoint the exact date as God the Father alone knows the times and seasons He has determined for the glorious return of His Son - see 1 Thes. 5.2-10).

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\*For more on this topic, go to our website, [www.housealtarnetwork.com](http://www.housealtarnetwork.com) (Documents) : Visions on Israel, also, if you can follow Afrikaans, go to (Audio) : “Die Heilige Gees in my Bediening” by Arie R J Blomerus (1910-1997), the prophetic word on Israel (Podcast 6 or 7).