

1 Thessalonians 5:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

Analysis

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night—autoi gar akribōs oidate hoti hēmera Kyriou hōs kleptēs en nykti houtōs erchetai (αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκριβῶς οἶδατε ὅτι ἡμέρα Κυρίου ὡς κλέπτῃς ἐν νυκτὶ οὕτως ἔρχεται). Akribōs (ἀκριβῶς, 'accurately/perfectly') indicates thorough prior teaching. Hēmera Kyriou (ἡμέρα Κυρίου, 'day of the Lord') is an OT concept (Joel 2:1-11; Amos 5:18-20; Zeph 1:14-18) describing God's intervention in judgment and salvation. For believers, it brings vindication (1:10; 4:17); for unbelievers, destruction (v. 3).

As a thief in the night (hōs kleptēs en nykti, ὡς κλέπτῃς ἐν νυκτί)—Jesus used this image (Matt 24:43-44; Luke 12:39-40), emphasizing suddenness and surprise, not secrecy. Thieves come unexpectedly when households sleep; Christ will return when the world is unprepared. This metaphor warns against complacency: since timing is unknown, constant readiness is required. Peter (2 Pet 3:10) and Jesus (Rev 3:3; 16:15) repeat this warning. The day's inevitability combined with timing's uncertainty creates eschatological tension: live expectantly without date-setting, watchfully without anxiety.

Historical Context

The 'day of the Lord' concept dominated Jewish eschatology—God would intervene to judge wickedness and vindicate His people. Paul applies this to Christ's return, merging judgment and salvation. For the church, the day brings glorification; for

the world, devastation (v. 3). Early Christians maintained constant readiness, viewing each day as potentially Christ's return. This urgent expectation motivated holiness, evangelism, and mutual encouragement. Later generations sometimes lost this urgency; recovering expectant watchfulness while avoiding date-setting fanaticism remains the challenge.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the 'thief in the night' metaphor affect your daily readiness for Christ's return?
2. What evidence demonstrates that you're living expectantly for the 'day of the Lord' rather than presuming delay?
3. How do you balance sober awareness of judgment's certainty with joyful anticipation of salvation's completion?

Interlinear Text

αὐτοὶ	γὰρ	ἀκριβῶς	οἶδατε	ὅτι	ἡ	ἡμέρα	κυρίου	ὥς
yourselves	For	perfectly	know	that	G3588	the day	of the Lord	as
G846	G1063	G199	G1492	G3754		G2250	G2962	G5613
κλέπτης	ἐν	νυκτὶ	οὕτως	ἔρχεται				
a thief	in	the night	so	cometh				
G2812	G1722	G3571	G3779	G2064				

Additional Cross-References

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

2 Peter 3:10 (References Lord): 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.

Revelation 3:3 (Parallel theme): 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.

Matthew 25:13 (Parallel theme): Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Jeremiah 23:20 (References Lord): The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.