

NEWS AND VIEWS
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*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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False Alarm! This is what I heard from time to time while involved in a parachurch ministry. We had an alarm system at the office and it was a combination fire and burglar alarm. At one point we began to get calls of fire alarm activation both night and day. Thankfully, all of them were false alarms. I was relieved to hear the words *false alarm*. The possible explanations offered were system malfunctions or power surges. But the burglar alarm was a different story. We have had several burglar alarm calls...and only at night. From all evidence examined, a couple of them probably *were* attempts by *a thief in the night*...a highly descriptive concept. Consider the following:

For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.

(I Thessalonians 5:2)

People in the early church at Thessalonica were asking when the Lord would return. After all, He had promised and many were wondering if they had missed it. The Apostle Paul addressed their concerns by reminding them that they could be informed. They knew full well the conditions of his return. They could be watching with anticipation even as the culture around them was oblivious to God's intentions. We have that same early warning system...a kind of heads up message, if you will. We have available the inspired word of the Living God. And in this passage, the Spirit of God wants us to know what's coming. After many false alarms throughout history and even in our day with the date setters and self-proclaimed prophets of their own imaginations, there is good evidence that declares this day will catch many unaware and unprepared. Let's explore what it might be like when we experience *The Coming Day in the Dark of the Night*. Some *know* He's coming... some don't even *suspect* it!

The pain that will come into the lives of those who miss the coming Day of the Lord will defy description. Those who are surprised by the Lord's return will be desperate people in desperate times. There will be feelings of remorse and regret, with many people wishing they had been prepared and could have anticipated the event. *Too late, too late*, will be the prevailing conclusion. The alarm sounds were ignored...many dismissed the ones who declared the Word of the Lord...they did not know the Lord of the Word. God will glorify His name in the Day of the Lord. End times are His times. We can glorify Him by preparing for that day by studying the characteristics of *a thief in the night*. We're entering darkening times... but when we fear God we don't have to be afraid of the dark.

I. A THIEF IN THE NIGHT WAITS UNTIL DARKNESS IS THE DARKEST.

When darkness is overwhelming, he takes advantage of it. He chooses to operate under the cloak of darkness to escape easy detection. Jesus comes when darkness is darkest. Light shines in darkness.

II. A THIEF IN THE NIGHT COMES WITHOUT WARNING. No respectable thief reveals his itinerary although we can know his intentions. A thief may let someone know he's coming. But he'll be careful not to disclose the timing. Christ can come anytime. Live that way.

III. A THIEF IN THE NIGHT COMES WITHOUT ANNOUNCING HIS ARRIVAL. Silently, stealthily, the thief uses this technique to exploit vulnerability. Once we know we can be victimized by a thief, we live with the sense of being vulnerable. We are indeed vulnerable at the return of the Lord. Nothing we can do will prevent it. We can only prepare for it. He *is* coming. Are you ready? Are you living in joyous anticipation or is there a sense of dread as you live in this world? Unconfessed sin can cause us to be uneasy in our mind. If this is your condition, can you hear the alarm system going off? Confess your sin to the Lord and be restored to your place in Him.

IV. A THIEF IN THE NIGHT USUALLY HAS DONE SOME RECONNAISSANCE.

He knows behavior because it has been observed over time. A thief will study the target. He will know the best time for his arrival. God knows the perfect timing of the Day of the Lord. He will have everything prepared for His purpose. What does He see in you?

V. A THIEF IN THE NIGHT DOES NOT LEAVE EMPTY HANDED. He leaves with something that another has previously claimed possession of. His purpose is to bring about a change of ownership. Jesus will come for those who are His. And He will rescue them from this world's bondage and the real thief who rules this world. All I can say is come quickly, Lord Jesus. Let's try to be ready. Let us be found traveling light, not weighted down by the heaviness of sin in this world.

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam