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The Lord Coming as a Thief in the Night:

of

2 Peter 3:10

Is it the Second Coming of Christ

or

the Secret Rapture

or

What is It and When Will it Occur?

The official Seventh-day church position¹ on the Lord's coming "as a thief in the night" tends to point to the second advent although a poll of individual church members revealed a wide variety of viewpoints. The purpose of this study is to carefully reexamine some of the key verses which mention the Lord coming as a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:1-6, Matt. 24:43, 44, and 2 Pet. 3:10) to determine if there is an earlier and primary application of these verses to an event which most Seventh-day Adventists are completely unaware, or indifferent to its claims, because it involves a fresh unfolding of Truth known as the judgment for the living. We will examine each set of scriptures in a step-by-step manner and with each other in order to gain a more complete understanding.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that *the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night*. For when they shall say, *Peace and safety*; then *sudden destruction* cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and *they shall not escape*. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as [do] others; but let us watch and be sober." — **1 Thessalonians 5:1-6**

¹ See: Appendix A

Let us examine several key phrases within these verses to determine what event this coming “as a thief in the night” is referring to as enumerated below.

- *as a thief in the night*
- *the day of the Lord*
- *Peace and safety*
- *sudden destruction*
- *they shall not escape*

As a Thief in the night

The phrase “as a thief in the night” appears two times in scripture (1 Thess. 5:2 and 2 Pet. 3:10) so we will breakdown and analyze these verses in detail to determine what this day of the Lord that is coming unexpectedly, “as a thief”, to God’s people by noticing that inspiration makes plain that these events occur *prior to* the visible second advent.

“While laboring at Thessalonica, Paul had so fully covered the subject of the signs of the times, showing what events would occur *prior to* the revelation of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven, that he did not think it necessary to write at length regarding this subject. He, however, pointedly referred to his former teachings. "Of the times and the seasons," he said, "ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them." — **Acts to the Apostles, p. 259.4**

Bringing us to examine what is . . .

The Day of the Lord?

To understand “the day of the Lord” we need to focus on the meaning of the word “day” This is best determined in Revelation 9:15 concerning the sixth trumpet (for more details on the explanation of the seven trumpets, please see the [Tract No. 5, “Final Warning”](#)).

“Now to continue we direct our attention to the truth concerning the four angels, "which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men." Rev. 9:15, last part.

The marginal rendering gives the preposition "at" for the preposition "for," making the verse read: "At an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year." Still more exactly rendered, it would read: "At an hour, at a day, at a month, and at a year." Thus are designated four points in time "at" which the four angels were to prepare "for to slay the third part of men." And as the "third part" in the trumpets represents, as we have seen, those who reject God's appeals to them to repent and be saved, then, accordingly, the angels' preparing themselves on four successive occasions for the eventual execution of death upon "the third part of men," shows that the men are to reject a four-phase (four-doctrine) message, each phase being revealed successively:

(1) The only revelation of truth pertaining to and coming "at an hour" is the proclamation of the angel's announcement: "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come." Rev. 14:7.

(2) The only revelation of truth pertaining to and coming "at a day" is the warning of "the day of vengeance" (Isa. 63:4), "the great and dreadful day of the Lord," which is to be heralded by the promised "Elijah the prophet." Mal. 4:5; Testimonies to Ministers, p. 475.

(3) The only revelation pertaining to and coming "at a month" is "the latter rain in the first month" (Joel 2:23) — the light of the angel who is to lighten the earth with his glory (Rev. 18:1; Early Writings, pp. 277, 278). Then "afterward," says the Lord, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh." Joel 2:28. Glorious prophetic promise, it envisages the power that God is to bestow upon His messengers who are to proclaim the message that is revealed in the time "of the latter rain." "At the right time" says the Spirit of Prophecy, "He sends His faithful messengers to do a work similar to that of Elijah." — Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 254. (For further study on the latter rain, see The Shepherd's Rod, Vol. 2, pp. 256, 257.)

(4) And, finally, the only revelation pertaining to and coming "at a year," and preparing the four angels "for to slay the third part of men" is says the Lord, "the year of My redeemed." Isa. 63:4. And this "year" at which His people are redeemed is, of course, the time of the sealing and of the deliverance of the 144,000, — those who are redeemed who escape the slaughter decreed in Ezekiel 9. Of these, the Lord says: "I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations,...to the isles afar off, that have not heard My fame, neither have seen My glory; and they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations . . . to My holy mountain Jerusalem, . . . in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord." Isa. 66:19, 20.

These four messages prepare the four angels "for to slay the third part of men" — all who fail to receive into their lives the saving truth of the gospel as revealed in the four messages. They are, to recapitulate, (1) those who close their ears to the proclamation of the judgment, which is revealed "at an hour"; (2) those who heed not the solemn warning of the day of God's vengeance, which is revealed "at a day"; (3) those who receive not the latter rain, which comes "at a month"; and (4) those who do not join "His redeemed" (the 144,000), who are sealed "at a year." All these who fail to make the needful preparation for glory land after the truth is proclaimed to them, shall perish at the command of the angelic horsemen whose army numbers "two-hundred thousand thousand." —**Tract No. 5, pp. 86-88**

Thus, *the day* of the Lord is synonymous with "the great and dreadful day of the Lord" found in Malachi 4:5. Although space does not allow us in this study, the great and dreadful day of the Lord is specifically referring to the judgment of the living which begins with God's last day church (1 Pet. 4:17), the seventh church in Revelation 2 and 3, Laodicea, the Seventh-day Adventist Church.²

"And it shall come to pass at that time, [that] I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil. Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit [them]; *The great day of the LORD [is] near*, [it is] near, and hasteth greatly, [even] the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. *That day [is] a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.*" —**Zephaniah 1:12-18**

² For more complete evidence to prove what is "the great and dreadful day of the Lord", see the tract entitled [General Conference Special](#).

Peace and Safety

The phrase “peace and safety” is mentioned a few places in scripture (Jer. 23). The most clear and succinct understanding that applies directly to the church today is found in the following statement.

Here we see that the church—the Lord's sanctuary—was the first to feel the stroke of the wrath of God. The ancient men, those to whom God had given great light and who had stood as guardians of the spiritual interests of the people, had betrayed their trust. They had taken the position that we need not look for miracles and the marked manifestation of God's power as in former days. Times have changed. These words strengthen their unbelief, and they say: The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil. He is too merciful to visit His people in judgment. Thus "*Peace and safety*" is the cry from men who will never again lift up their voice like a trumpet to show God's people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins. These dumb dogs that would not bark are the ones who feel the just vengeance of an offended God. Men, maidens, and little children all perish together." — **Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 211**

There is no question here that this is also referring to the judgment of the living which first begins in the church by making specific reference to the church leadership, the ancient men, who are not warning the laity. They are the first to perish in the judgment of Ezekiel nine.

Sudden Destruction

The sudden destruction that Paul is referring to is found in the following scriptures.

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, *shall suddenly come to his temple*, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he [is] like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit [as] a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.” — **Malachi 3:1-3**

“And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and [so] *that day come upon you unawares.*” — **Luke 21:34**

They Shall Not Escape

The only escape of God's saints from His judgment is the 144,000 who escape the slaughter in the ninth chapter of Ezekiel as seen in the following scriptures.

"For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and *the slain of the LORD shall be many*. . . . And I will set a sign among them, and I will send *those that escape* of them unto the nations, [to] Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, [to] Tubal, and Javan, [to] the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren [for] an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD." —

Isaiah 66:15, 16, 19, 20

The Unexpected Coming: Matthew 24:40-51

"Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left." — **Matthew 24:40**

Do you want to be left or taken?

Now let us examine,

What is the meaning of the word "taken"?

"And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be *taken*." — **Isaiah 8:14-15**

"To whom he said, This [is] the rest [wherewith] ye may cause the weary to rest; and this [is] the refreshing; yet they would not hear. But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, [and] there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and *taken*" — **Isaiah 28:12-13**

“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because, [I say], that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be *taken* with the hand.” — **Ezekiel 21:24**

From these verses it is clear that for one to be taken is not a good thing, but rather a snare where the recipient stumbles, falls, and is broken.

What will be the fate of false prophets and teachers and their followers in the church who prophecy “peace, peace when there is no peace?”

“Why [then] is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. . . . How do ye say, We [are] wise, and the law of the LORD [is] with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he [it]; the pen of the scribes [is] in vain. The wise [men] are ashamed, they are dismayed and *taken*: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom [is] in them? . . . The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” — **Jeremiah 8:5, 8-9, 20**

“For because thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be *taken*: and Chemosh shall go forth into captivity [with] his priests and his princes together. And the spoiler shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape: the valley also shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed, as the LORD hath spoken” — **Jeremiah 48:1, 7, 8**

The false prophets, teachers, and their devotees will be destroyed as the Lord has spoken. *Taken* clearly means death, destruction! There is no getting around this.

So where are the wicked taken?

“I tell you, in that night there shall be two [men] in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two [women] shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two [men] shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body [is], thither will the eagles be gathered together.” — **Luke 17:34-37**

The wicked are taken where the eagles gather and this is what happens to their slain bodies as shown in the following verses.

“And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;” — **Revelation 19:17** (destruction during the 7th plague)

“For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” — **Matthew 24:28**

The eagles are gathered together to consume the bodies of the wicked, *not* to gather them in the sky which is what happens to the saints when Christ comes at the second advent in the clouds of glory (cf. 1 Thess 4:17) .

“Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, [and] her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain [are], there [is] she.” — **Job 39:27-30**

“And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, [even] a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood.” — **Ezekiel 39:17**

“And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.” — **Zephaniah 1:17**

So as we turn back to Matthew 24 it is plain to now see that the coming of the Son of man spoken of in the following verses is not strictly the second advent, as most Seventh-day Adventists believe, but rather a coming to take away the wicked from among the righteous just in the same manner that God separated Noah and his family in the ark before the destruction of the earth and the wicked in that day by the flood.

But of that day and hour knoweth no [man], no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe [were], so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two [women shall be] grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.” — **Matthew 24:36-41**.

The Paradox: A Coming of the Lord That the People Don't Expect.

"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." — **Matthew 24:43, 44**

This coming therefore is *not* the second advent, but the coming of the Lord to purify His church. The following verses confirm this by revealing the two classes in the church that will be separated at this coming, the faithful and wise servant and the evil servant.

Who is the Faithful and Wise Servant?

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed [is] that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods" — **Matthew 24:45-47**

If the wise servant is giving "meat in due season" (present truth) when the Lord comes then probation must still be open since there would be no point in giving a message *after* probation closes. This proves that this coming is *not* the visible second advent.

Who is The Evil Servant

But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite [his] fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for [him], and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint [him] his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." — **Matthew 24:48-51**

There are two classes in the church, wheat and tares. God must come (secretly or unexpectedly) to separate *prior* to the visible second advent while probation is still open for the world.

2 Peter 3:10 **“the thief in the night”:** **How Do We Understand This?**

“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.” — **2 Peter 3:10**

In order to gather the proper application for this verse it is important to place in context with the entire chapter of which we will highlight some key points.

And saying, Where is the promise of *his coming*? for *since the fathers fell asleep*, all things continue as [they were] from the beginning of the creation.” — **2 Peter 3:4**

The coming in this verse is referring to the one found in Mal. 3:1-3 as quoted above. Herein is an unexpected coming to the Lord to His temple to purify the church and this is why Peter says “since the fathers fell asleep” because the preachers are preachers “peace and safety” when cometh sudden destruction (see: 5T 211 above).

“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, *reserved unto fire against the day of judgment* and perdition of ungodly men.” — **2 Peter 3:7**

The day of judgment is none other than the great and dreadful day of the Lord as found in Mal. 4:5 and discussed above in regard to section on the coming in 1 Thess. 5:1-6. God’s judgment being “reserved unto fire” is referring to the destructive judgment found in Ezekiel 9 and show by another angle in the following scripture.

“For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with *flames of fire*. *For by fire and by his sword* will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many.” — **Isaiah 66:15, 16**

The coming of the Lord in these verses to plead with all flesh and then slay the wicked is likened to a destructive judgment with “flames of fire”. This is the same judgment as revealed to the prophet Ezekiel in the ninth chapter. Why the use of fire? Because it shows how thorough and complete will be the separation of the wheat from the tares which are gathered into bundles to be burned (Matt. 13:30).

"Looking for and hasting unto *the coming of the day of God*, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" — **2 Peter 3:12**

This verse referring to "the coming of the day of God" is the same as verse 10. So how do we understand these signs "wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" They are symbols of the destructive judgment that is about to take place within the church. Inspiration explains this in the context of connecting 2 Pet 3:10 with events that take place during the sixth seal as described below.

"These global disturbances and celestial exhibitions between the years 1755 and 1833, in themselves, however, *appear to be forecasts of the things which take place during the great and dreadful day of the Lord.*" If this be true, then the earthquake foreshadows the forthcoming shaking, sifting, among the nations, as predicted by the prophets:

"Behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with His anger, and the burden thereof is heavy: His lips are full of indignation, and His tongue as a devouring fire: and His breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err." "And the fir trees shall be terribly shaken." Isa. 30:27, 28; Nah. 2:3.

The darkening of the sun would bespeak the closing of the gospel, the end of probationary time, the time when man "shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord, and shall not find it." "For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." Amos 8:12; Isa. 60:2.

The moon, associated with the sun, makes a fitting symbol of the church, the agency by which the Word of God, the light of the world, is reflected. The moon's becoming as blood immediately following the darkening of the sun, refusing to reflect light, would be an appropriate omen of the church's having finished her work of salvation, no longer needing to reflect the Light of the gospel. And the church herself is, of course, at that time imbued with eternal life, delivered from destruction as were the firstborn in the dwellings where the door posts had been painted with the sacrificial blood on the evening of the Passover in the land of Egypt.

The *falling stars* are suggestive of the great and terrible day of the Lord -- the day in which "the heavens . . . pass away" (2 Pet. 3:10), the day in which all their host is dissolved, and in which the Devil and his host, also the wicked in the church and in the

world, "shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree." Isa. 34:4.

All these signs stand as faithful witnesses that the sixth seal, the sixth period of time, brings the great day of God, the wrath of the Lamb."— **Tract No. 15, pp. 55, 56**

Falling Stars a Symbol of the Church Leaders

"The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." — **Revelation 1:20**

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, *without spot, and blameless.*" — **2 Peter 3:14**

The only way we are going to be found without spot and blameless is as the Lord comes to His temple to purify the sons of Levi as found in Mal. 3:1-3 which we have already reviewed.

Does 2 Peter 3:10 have application to other periods of time?

Yes, if one looks at all of the evidence from the Holy Bible supported by the Spirit of Prophecy this verse begins at the judgment for the living in the church (1 Pet. 4:17) and continues on through the destructive judgments that will fall upon Babylon during the seven last plaques and culminating with Christ's visible second advent where the remaining wicked will perish at the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8). At this time the saints, both resurrected and translated, will depart from the earth to spend 1,000 years in heaven with the Lord while the earth remains without form and void as described in the following verses and understood by most S. D. A.'s.

"I beheld the earth, and, lo, [it was] without form, and void; and the heavens, and they [had] no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, [there was] no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place [was] a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, [and] by his fierce anger. For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end." — **Jeremiah 4:23-27**

Conclusion

Phrase	Verse(s)	Application
"thief in the night"	1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10; Mal. 3:1-3	Primary: Ezekiel 9, judgment for the living, an unexpected coming of the Lord. Secondary: Second Advent
"heavens shall pass away"	2 Pet. 3:10, Rev. 6:13, Mal. 4:5	"suggestive of the great and terrible day of the Lord". Begins at the church, continues out into the world.
"the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."	2 Pet. 3:7, 10; Isa. 66:15, 16; Mal. 3:1-3; Isa. 34:4	the day of judgment, reserved unto fire, Ezekiel 9

Based upon the weight of evidence and sound Biblical exegesis, we can affirmatively conclude that the study above shows that the coming of the Lord as a "thief in the night" found in 1 Thess. 5:2, Matt. 24:43, 44, and 2 Pet. 3:10 proved that it is none other than the last period of earth's history when the probation for the church closes where the *judgment of the living* is to take place, first beginning with the church, then extending out into the world and culminating with that long awaited brilliant splendor of the *visible* second advent of our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus in the clouds of glory.

The conventional mainstream Adventist teaching that these verses apply *only* to the second advent and the Lord's coming after the millennium is limited due to their lack of understanding of what constitutes the *judgment of the living*, specially as outlined in the ninth chapter of Ezekiel.

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." — **2 Timothy 2:15**

∞ **End of Study** ∞

Before we close, we would like to admonish our Beloved Brethren of Laodicea — the S. D. A. church, "the apple in His eye" to please prayerfully and carefully think about

the above study, analyze it and most of all, *ponder* upon it for the soul you save may be your own .

“Where [there is] no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy [is] he.” — **Proverbs 29:18**

For further questions or comments, or to explore further topics brought up in this study such as the judgment of the living and Ezekiel 9, please feel free to contact us anytime at the following address:

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Appendix A:

Official Seventh-day Adventist Church Teaching

Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs³ to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church's understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word.

*Seventh-day Adventists Believe ...
A Biblical Exposition
of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*

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from chapter 24 entitled "The Second Coming of Christ"
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A Sudden, Unexpected Return. Christian believers, longing and looking for Christ's return, will be aware when it draws near (1 Thess. 5:4-6). But for the inhabitants of the world in general, Paul wrote, "The day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5:2, 3; cf. Matt. 24:43).

Some have concluded that Paul's comparison of Christ's coming to that of a thief indicates that He will come in some secret, invisible manner. However, such a view contradicts the Biblical picture of Christ's return in glory and splendor in view of everyone (Rev. 1:7). Paul's point is not that Christ's coming is secret, but that, for the worldly minded, it is as unexpected as that of a thief.

Christ makes the same point by comparing His coming with the unexpected destruction of the antediluvian world by the Flood. "For as in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew

³ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe ... A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, 1988, Review and Herald Publishing, Hagerstown, MD

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" (Matt. 24:38, 39, NIV). Though Noah had preached for many years about a coming flood, it took most people by surprise. There were two classes of people living. One class believed Noah's word and went into the ark and was saved, the other chose to stay outside the ark and the "flood came and took them all away" (Matt. 24:39).

from Chapter 26 entitled "The Millennium and the End of Sin"
(<http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/books/27/27-26.htm>)

2. The fate of the wicked. According to the Scriptures, God promises eternal life only to the righteous. The wages of sin is *death*, not eternal life in hell (Rom. 6:23).

The Scriptures teach that the wicked will be "cut off" (Ps. 37:9, 34); that they will perish (Ps. 37:20; 68:2). They will not live in a state of consciousness forever, but will be burned up (Mal. 4:1; Matt. 13:30, 40; **2 Peter 3:10**). They will be destroyed (Ps. 145:20; 2 Thess. 1:9; Heb. 2:14), consumed (Ps. 104:35).

From the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventist Church

12. The Remnant and Its Mission

The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness. (Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12; 18:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:10; Jude 3, 14; 1 Peter 1:16-19; **2 Peter 3:10-14**; Rev. 21:1-14.)

25. Second Coming of Christ:

The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. The Saviour's coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die. The almost complete fulfillment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ's coming is imminent. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all times. (Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:7; **Matt. 24:43, 44**; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8; Rev. 14:14-20; 19:11-21; Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; **1 Thess. 5:1-6**.)

28. New Earth:

On the new earth, in which righteousness dwells, God will provide an eternal home for the redeemed and a perfect environment for everlasting life, love, joy, and learning in His presence. For here God Himself will dwell with His people, and suffering and death will have

passed away. The great controversy will be ended, and sin will be no more. All things, animate and inanimate, will declare that God is love; and He shall reign forever. Amen. (2 Peter 3:13; Isa. 35; 65:17-25; Matt. 5:5; Rev. 21:1-7; 22:1-5; 11:15.)

Doug Batchelor's teaching on 2 Pet. 3:10 ties with Mt. 24:43, 44

(from a tract entitled "The Secret Rapture")

"Now, I realize that the rapturists hang onto the texts that liken the Lord's coming to "a thief in the night." They assume that this must be a quiet, secret coming. But does it really mean that? Let's show that it definitely does not. Here is one of those texts in 2 Peter 3: 10: "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." Obviously the "thief" part has nothing to do with secrecy because the heavens will pass away with a great noise! And if coming "as a thief" is the secret rapture which takes place seven years before the end of the world, how can the heavens and earth "pass away," as Peter describes it? The heavens and earth could not pass away seven years before the world ends - that is the end!

The fact is that Jesus Himself explained clearly just how a thief's coming could be related to His coming: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up" (Matthew 24:42, 43). There it is, so plain and simple! The thief would come unexpectedly when the owners were not looking for a thief. In the same way, His coming would take people by surprise. They would not be watching or looking for it.

A survey of what some typical Seventh-day Adventists believe will take place when the Lord comes as "a thief in the night".

Representative Replies from S. D. A. Members:

(from Adventist Online Forum)

Brother M: I was taught that it is the second coming of our Lord and Saviour Christ, Jesus in the clouds of glory in what is commonly known as the second advent.

Sister B: It is the secret rapture just before the coming of Jesus the second time to take us to heaven for one thousand years.

Sister D: It is the coming of Jesus after the millennium since in that same verse it stated that the earth "shall be burned up" since when Jesus comes in the clouds of glory the earth is not burned up.

Brother S: It is the coming of Jesus in secret.

Sister P: “Thief in the night” of 2 Peter 3:10 is the second coming of Jesus for those who are not prepared and still think about worldly pleasures, fame and glory that money can buy. Some of us worldly minded Adventists will not be prepared because they do not study for themselves. They are focused on working hard and believe to have lots of money like Abraham so that they can give support to the church ministry to pay the evangelists to reach the world since they could not do it themselves, but they will let their money work for them.

Although there are other answers and opinions voiced by church members, below is the official church position on the Lord’s second coming which states:

Appendix B:

Contradiction: The Spirit of Prophecy (SOP) applies 2 Peter 3:10 to the second coming so you are wrong to say that coming as a thief in the night in during Ezekiel 9.

Reply: In one taking the position that because the SOP makes an application of 2 Peter 3:10 to the second advent that it cannot apply during Ezekiel 9 or other events would propel the holder into direct contradiction with not only the Shepherd’s Rod, but also the SOP itself. Such a short sighted practice of isolating passages of scripture or statements in the SOP from their context and the authors intended meaning has been an oft used tactic by the enemy to cause God’s people to go astray. History is replete with such examples for our admonition.⁴ We have also compiled [ten examples of such apparent contradictions](#) between the SOP and the Rod that were addressed by Brother Houteff in the *Symbolic Codes*.

Does the SOP contradict itself?

How does one harmonize within the SOP itself when the statement in Great Controversy, p. 672 makes an application of 2 Pet. 3:10 after the millennium whereas a passage given in the Bible Commentary Vol. 7, p. 646.7 suggests an application “before the Son of man appears in the clouds of heaven”?

⁴ Please review Tract No. 7 for numerous examples of how the enemies of the Rod attempted to refute the writings of the Shepherd’s Rod using the SOP and ended up making the SOP appear to contradict itself.

"Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire." "The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and His fury upon all their armies: He hath utterly destroyed them, He hath delivered them to the slaughter." "Upon the wicked He shall rain quick burning coals, fire and brimstone and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." Isaiah 9:5; 34:2; Psalm 11:6, margin. Fire comes down from God out of heaven. The earth is broken up. The weapons concealed in its depths are drawn forth. Devouring flames burst from every yawning chasm. The very rocks are on fire. The day has come that shall burn as an oven. The elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein are burned up. Malachi 4:1; 2 Peter 3:10. The earth's surface seems one molten mass--a vast, seething lake of fire. It is the time of the judgment and perdition of ungodly men--"the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion." Isaiah 34:8." — **Great Controversy, p. 672.2**

Before the Son of man appears in the clouds of heaven, everything in nature will be convulsed. Lightning from heaven uniting with the fire in the earth, will cause the mountains to burn like a furnace, and pour out their floods of lava over villages and cities. Molten masses of rock, thrown into the water by the upheaval of things hidden in the earth, will cause the water to boil and send forth rocks and earth. There will be mighty earthquakes and great destruction of human life. But as in the days of the great Deluge Noah was preserved in the ark that God had prepared for him, so in these days of destruction and calamity, God will be the refuge of His believing ones . . . [Psalm 91:9, 10; 27:5 quoted] (Letter 258, 1907)." — **Bible Commentary Vol. 7, p. 646.7**

Do the following statements have an application prior to the visible second advent?

"Let every soul be on the alert. The adversary is on your track. Be vigilant, watching diligently lest some carefully concealed and masterly snare shall take you unawares. Let the careless and indifferent beware lest *the day of the Lord come upon them as a thief in the night*. Many will wander from the path of humility, and, casting aside the yoke of Christ, will walk in strange paths. Blinded and bewildered, they will leave the narrow path that leads to the city of God.

A man cannot be a happy Christian unless he is a watchful Christian. He who overcomes must watch; for, with worldly entanglements, error, and superstition, Satan strives to win Christ's followers from Him. It is not enough that we avoid glaring dangers and perilous, inconsistent moves. We are to keep close to the side of Christ, walking in the path of self-denial and sacrifice. We are in an enemy's country. He who was cast out of heaven has come down with great power. With every conceivable

artifice and device he is seeking to take souls captive. Unless we are constantly on guard we shall fall an easy prey to his unnumbered deceptions." — **Testimonies Vol.8, p. 99-100.1**

"But there *is a day* that God hath appointed for *the close of this world's history*. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Prophecy is fast fulfilling. More, much more, should be said about these tremendously important subjects. *The day* is at hand when the destiny of every soul will be fixed forever. This *day of the Lord* hastens on apace. The false watchmen are raising the cry, "All is well"; but the day of God is rapidly approaching. Its footsteps are so muffled that it does not arouse the world from the deathlike slumber into which it has fallen. While the watchmen cry, "Peace and safety," "sudden destruction cometh upon them," "and they shall not escape"; "for as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." It overtakes the pleasure-lover and the sinful man *as a thief in the night*. When all is apparently secure, and men retire to contented rest, then the prowling, stealthy, midnight thief steals upon his prey. When it is too late to prevent the evil, it is discovered that some door or window was not secured. "Be ye also ready: for in an such hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." People are now settling to rest, imagining themselves secure under the popular churches; but let all beware, lest there is a place left open for the enemy to gain an entrance. Great pains should be taken to keep this subject before the people. The solemn fact is to be kept not only before the people of the world, but before our own churches also, that *the day of the Lord will come suddenly, unexpectedly*. The fearful warning of the prophecy is addressed to every soul. Let no one feel that he is secure from the danger of being surprised. Let no one's interpretation of prophecy rob you of the conviction of the knowledge of events which show that this great event is near at hand." — **Fundamentals of Education, p. 335.2**