

## A Secret Rapture?

AS I'VE SPENT TIME STUDYING PROPHECY I've noticed that some people apparently believe in the idea of a "secret Rapture". What they mean by this is *not* that no one knows when the Rapture will occur (which is quite correct), but rather that when the Rapture happens no one will notice. They seem to think that the Lord will return for the Church and will take them away to Heaven without anyone noticing. The world will simply go on about its business as if nothing had happened.

As far as I can tell, this idea is apparently based on this verse:

**I Thessalonians 5:2:** "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night."

There are a number of serious problems with this theory. First of all, this verse is talking about the "day of the Lord". This is a reference to the *Tribulation*, not the Rapture. We know this because the Old Testament has quite a lot to say about the "day of the Lord". For example:

**Isaiah 13:6:** "Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty."

**Joel 2:1:** "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand;

2 A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations."

Notice that the prophets are talking about a day of "destruction" and a time of "darkness" – *not* a time when the Lord takes His Bride home! According to Joel, this is a period of such great trouble that it will be unlike anything that has ever happened before in all of history. This perfectly echoes what Jesus said in Matthew:

**Matthew 24:21:** "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

As we discussed previously, what Jesus describes in Matthew 24 (part of which is quoted above) are the events of the Tribulation, which occur just before Jesus returns. When Paul says in I Thessalonians 5:2 that the day of the Lord comes as a "thief in the night", he is saying that the Tribulation will catch the world off-guard. When Jesus says in Matthew 24:42 that "ye know not what hour your Lord doth come", He is talking about His return *after* the Tribulation – *not* the Rapture! Remember, the Rapture happens *before* the Tribulation, but the return that Jesus speaks of in Matthew 24:30 happens *after* the Tribulation.

So, we can immediately see that I Thessalonians 5:2 isn't even talking about the Rapture. It has an entirely different subject in mind.

We can go further than this, however. The Bible says that the Tribulation will come "as a thief

in the night”. When a thief breaks into a home he catches the homeowners off-guard, because they weren't expecting to be visited by a burglar. However, after the thief has come and gone the owners are *very* aware that someone has been there *because all of their possessions are gone*. Of course, once the thief strikes and carries off your valuables it is too late to do anything about it.

This is what Paul is trying to say. The Tribulation will take the unbelieving world by surprise. They will not see it coming, but they will know when it has arrived because terrible things will start happening. By then, however, it will be much too late to escape it.

The same thing can be said of the Rapture. No one knows when it will happen; it may be soon or it may be many generations away. It will come much like a thief in the night – when it happens it will catch the world by surprise. After it happens the world will know that something must have just occurred to make many people vanished, but it will be too late to do anything about it. The opportunity will have passed.

It is *not* reasonable to think that the Rapture will go unnoticed. After all, millions of people are going to suddenly vanish! How could that go unnoticed? It will probably be the biggest news story of all time – the mass abduction of *millions* of people from all walks of life. The world will know that something *big* just happened. It will come as a surprise, but after it happens there will be nothing *secret* about it.