

# 2 Peter 3:10

by John Gill

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*The sermon explains the Day of the Lord, when the Lord will come unexpectedly, causing the heavens to pass away with a great noise, and the earth to be purged and purified.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 65:17, Matthew 24:44, Luke 2:8, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 4:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, Hebrews 12:26, 2 Peter 3:10, Revelation 20:11

**Topics:** "The Second Coming", "Preparedness for Judgment"

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## Description

John Gill emphasizes the certainty and suddenness of the Lord's return, likening it to a thief coming in the night, which signifies an unexpected and unannounced arrival. He explains that this event will bring about the passing away of the heavens and the earth, purging them through fire, and that all earthly works will be consumed. Gill also notes that this prophecy was known not only to the Jews but also to various philosophers and poets of the time, indicating its significance across cultures. He suggests that while some interpretations may refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, the ultimate meaning points to the final judgment and renewal of creation. The sermon serves as a reminder of the urgency to be prepared for the Lord's return.

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## Transcript

Ver. 10. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night,.... That is, the Lord will come in that day, which he has fixed, according to his promise, than which nothing is more certain; and he will come as a thief in the night: he will come "in the night", which may be literally understood; for as his first coming was in the night; see Lu 2:8; so perhaps his second coming may be in the night season; or figuratively, when it will be a time of great darkness; when there will be little faith in the earth, and both the wise and foolish virgins will be slumbering and sleeping; when it will be a season of great security, as it was in the days of Noah, and at the time of the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions, leave out the phrase, "in the night": and the Alexandrian copy uses the emphatic article, "in the night": and he will come, "as a thief", in the dark, indiscernibly; it will not be known what hour he will come; he will come suddenly, at an unawares, when he is not expected, to the great surprise of men, and especially of the scoffers; when the following awful things will be done:

in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise; not the third heaven, the seat of angels and glorified saints, and even of God himself; but the starry and airy heavens, which shall pass away, not as to their matter and substance, but as to some of their accidents and qualities, and the present use of them;

and that with a great noise, like that of a violent storm, or tempest; though the Ethiopic version renders it, "without a noise"; and which is more agreeable to his coming as a thief, which is not with noise, but in as still a manner as possible; and some learned men observe, that the word signifies swiftly, as well as with a noise; and, accordingly, the Syriac version renders it "suddenly"; and the Arabic version "presently", immediately; that is, as soon as Christ shall come, immediately, at once, from his face shall the earth and heavens flee away, as John in a vision saw, Re 20:11;

and the elements shall melt with fervent heat: not what are commonly called the four elements, earth, air, fire, and water, the first principles of all things: the ancient philosophers distinguished between principles and elements; principles, they say {h}, are neither generated, nor corrupted; τα τε στοιχεια κατα την εκpurwsin

fyeiresyai, "but the elements will be corrupted, or destroyed by the conflagration"; which exactly agrees with what the apostle here says: by the elements seem to be meant the host of heaven, being distinguished from the heavens, as the works of the earth are distinguished from the earth in the next clause; and design the firmament, or expanse, with the sun, moon, and stars in it, which will be purged and purified by this liquefaction by fire;

the earth also will be purged and purified from everything that is noxious, hurtful, unnecessary, and disagreeable; though the matter and substance of it will continue:

and the works that are therein shall be burnt up; all the works of nature, wicked men, cattle, trees, &c. and all the works of men, cities, towns, houses, furniture, utensils, instruments of arts of all sorts, will be burnt by a material fire, breaking out of the earth and descending from heaven, for which the present heavens and earth are reserved: this general conflagration was not only known to the Jews, but to the Heathens, to the poets, and Platonist and Stoic philosophers, who frequently {i} speak of it in plain terms. Some are of opinion that these words refer to the destruction of Jerusalem; and so the passing away of the heavens may design the removal of their church state and ordinances, Heb 12:26, and the melting of the elements the ceasing of the ceremonial law, called the elements of the world, Ga 4:3, and the burning of the earth the destruction of the land of Judea, expressed in such a manner in De 29:23, and particularly of the temple, and the curious works in that, which were all burnt up and destroyed by fire, though Titus endeavoured to prevent it, but could not {k}: which sense may be included, inasmuch as there was a promise of Christ's coming to destroy the Jewish nation, and was expected; and which destruction was a prelude of the destruction of the world, and is sometimes expressed in such like language as that is; but then this must not take place, to the exclusion of the other sense: and whereas this sense makes the words to be taken partly in a figurative, and partly in a literal way; and seeing the heavens and the earth are in the context only literally taken, the former sense is to be preferred; and to which best agrees the following use to be made of these things.

{h} Diog. Laert. l. 7. in Vita Zenonis. {i} Vid. Diog. Laert. ib. & l. 9. in Vita Heraclit. & Hesych. de Philos. p. 36. Arrian. Epict. l. 3. c. 13. Phurut. de Natura Deorum, p. 39. Ovid. Metamorph. fab. 7. Min. Felix, p. 37. & Justin. Martyr. Apol. 2. p. 66. {k} Vid. Joseph. de Bello Jud. l. 3. c. 9, 10. & l. 7. c. 14, 16.

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