

END-TIMES ISSUES

#4 How to "speed-up" Jesus' coming!

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WOULD YOU LIKE JESUS TO COME...

→ *Sooner?*
→ *Or later?*

(Your response is a reflection of what's in your heart.)

- **Do we *really* want Jesus to return?**
Or have the things of the world captured our hearts?
- **If YES, then WHY do we want him to return?**
Motives are also an issue.

Scripture describes God's people as being **eager** for Jesus' return.

[We] groan inwardly as we **wait eagerly** for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

Romans 8:23b (NIV)
Creation also groans – v. 22.

[Jesus] says, "Yes, I am coming soon!" **Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!**

Revelation 22:20b (NET)

Meanwhile we **groan, longing** to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling [= bodies], ...

2 Corinthians 5:2 (NIV)

Our Lord, come!

1 Corinthians 16:22b (NET)

... the crown of righteousness ... for all who **eagerly look forward to his appearing.**

2 Timothy 4:8b (NLT)

[Christ] will appear a second time, ... to bring salvation to **those who eagerly await Him.**

Hebrews 9:28b (BSB)

Did you know you can "speed-up" Jesus' coming?

... as you look forward to the day of God and **speed its coming.**

2 Peter 3:12a (NIV)

Certain things need to happen before Jesus will return.
The sooner they are done, the sooner Jesus will return.

We have the opportunity to participate in these things.
Our choice (to participate or not) will influence the timing of when these necessary prerequisites are fulfilled.

★ This means: Our actions really matter! ★

"Speed-up" Jesus' coming? What does that mean?

What it DOES NOT mean:
It is **NOT** a denial of God's sovereignty.

God alone knows the time of Jesus' future coming.
Even Jesus, when speaking as a human, did not know it.

No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Mark 13:32 (BSB)

Moreover, we cannot *change* what God has sovereignly planned.
(Instead, we make choices that *go along with it.*)

What it DOES mean:

It is an affirmation of human responsibility.

God uses the choices and actions of people and things to accomplish his purposes.

AND

There are certain things that God has said *must* happen before Jesus returns. Accomplishing these things often involves the actions of people.

God's plan includes:

- ✓ **The final event** (= Jesus' return, planned by God),
 > as well as <
- ✓ **Everything that leads up to it** (= people's actions and everything else that happens).

OUR ACTIONS ARE HERE!

In many ways, it's just like Jesus' first coming.

From the "sovereignty" perspective, God planned it and knew when it was going to happen.

AND

From the "human responsibility" perspective, people did things and made choices. These led up to that event and to the fulfillment of all the prophecies related to that event.

God's plan included:

- ✓ **The final event** (= Jesus' first coming, planned by God),
 > as well as <
- ✓ **Everything that led up to it** (= people's actions and everything else that happened).

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Does this mean we can predict or calculate the time of Jesus' return?

The short answer: Of course not! (The Bible says we can't.)

The long answer: NO human can see the full picture.

- **There are things not revealed**, which will also have to take place. (An example we know about: Revelation 10:1-4.)
- **Some conditions may look "unfulfilled" to us**; yet God could accomplish them *without our knowing it*.
- **Some conditions may look "fulfilled" to us**; yet there may be unfulfilled aspects of it that we cannot see.

↪ **This means we are not capable of having all the knowledge necessary for determining an accurate answer.**

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Instead of making predictions, OUR responsibility is:

- ① **WE need to do our job** – i.e., we need to obey Jesus.
 > AND <
- ② **WE need to let God do his job** – i.e., to decide when the end will come. We should *not* try to decide it for him!

Our responsibility is similar to what the apostles were told:

GOD'S JOB Jesus replied, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority.

THE APOSTLE'S JOB But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Act 1:7-8 (BSB)

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SUMMARY

- ① **Sovereignty and responsibility work together.**
 ✓ *We do not need to know how*, in order to accept that they do work that way.
- ② **We are to focus on our responsibility.**
 ✓ God can do his job without our advice or help!
- ③ **Certain things must occur before Jesus returns.**
 ✓ The question is whether or not we are willing to participate in accomplishing those things. (We will be describing them.) →
- ④ **Our willingness to obey Jesus will "speed his coming"...**
 ✓ If we choose to disobey, and leave the necessary actions for someone else to do, the *opposite* may take place.

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What can we do? → ① **Pray for it.**

- Do you realize that Jesus tells us to pray for it?

So then, this is how you should pray:
 'Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come,
 Your will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven. ...

Matthew 6:9-10 (BSB)

Some aspects of the kingdom are "present tense" (as God works in and through the lives of his people). *But this prayer focuses on the "future tense" of the kingdom.*

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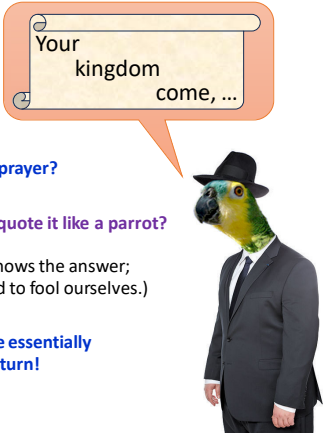
Self evaluation.

Your kingdom come, ...

- **Do you ever pray this prayer?**
 If so, do you *mean* it?
Or do you mindlessly quote it like a parrot?

(*God* already knows the answer; but we often tend to fool ourselves.)

- **If you mean it, you are essentially praying for Jesus to return!**



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- **BE AWARE** that prayer often requires a response on **OUR** part. (God will take care of HIS part.)
- ➔ If we are eager for the day of Jesus' return, we will want to do things that speed its coming.

- ① There is a *connection* between prayer and Jesus' return!
- ② If our prayer is *genuine*, we will want to do whatever is necessary to be ready. (Scripture identifies that "whatever.")
- ③ ... AND we will want others to be ready, as well.

... **as you look forward to the day of God** and speed its coming.
2 Peter 3:12a (NIV)

The **CONTEXT** of this verse shows us **two more things** to do.

What can we do? ➔ ② **Live holy and godly lives.**

- Why would *anyone* want Jesus to return, if they weren't willing to get ready?

WHAT TO DO

You ought to live **holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.**

... make every effort to be found **spotless, blameless and at peace with him.**

HOW TO DO IT

... **be on your guard** so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position.

But **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

2 Peter 3:11b-12a, 14b, 17b-18a (NIV)

Self evaluation. Consider these 3 issues:

- ➔ **First:** Anyone who desires to be *with* Jesus will want to be *like* Jesus in true holiness.

- It's part of what the good news *teaches* us.

You were taught ... to put on the new self, created to be **like God in true righteousness and holiness.**
Ephesians 4:22a, 24 (NIV)

- Scripture says it's the *desire* of all who have been saved.

We do know that when Christ appears we will be like him because we will see him as he is.

So **all people who have this confidence in Christ keep themselves pure, as Christ is pure.**
1 John 3:2b-3 (GW)

- ➔ **Second:** Jesus' return not only brings *blessings* to his people; but there will be *devastating consequences* for those who haven't repented. (Which group do YOU want to be in?)

By God's word, the present heaven and earth are designated to be burned. They are being kept until the day **ungodly people will be judged and destroyed.**
2 Peter 3:7 (GW)

WHO are the "ungodly"? All who haven't repented.

If this is you, be aware that God has been *patiently* giving you an opportunity to repent.

[He] is *patient* with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to *repentance*.
2 Peter 3:9b (BSB)

Have you been unwilling to repent? God doesn't want you to perish. But one of these days, his patience with you is going to come to an end.

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, **you are storing up wrath against yourself** for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.
Romans 2:5 (NIV)

But **the Day of the Lord will come like a thief.** The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and its works will be laid bare.
2 Peter 3:10 (BSB)

- ➔ **Third:** Those who *don't* pursue righteousness will be *excluded* from the new earth – because *only righteousness dwells there*. (See also Matthew 5:20.)

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live **holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.**
2 Peter 3:11-12a (NIV)

People who stubbornly *refuse* to repent *will be destroyed*, because only *righteous* people can live on the new earth.

That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a **new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.**
2 Peter 3:12b-13 (NIV)

ONLY RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE CAN LIVE HERE!

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT REPENTED:

☞ Your destruction has not yet come. *God, in love, offers you mercy. You still have an opportunity to end your rebellion and surrender to God. We urge you to do so!*

We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:20b-21 (NIV)

☞ We have just illustrated another way God's people can "speed his coming" – by *sharing the Good News with those who have not yet repented.*

What can we do? → ③ **Help others to prepare for Jesus' coming.**

★ This involves sharing the Good News with them. ★
(We will look more at this issue next time.)

If you care about other people, you will want them to become HOLY, rather than being destroyed at the judgment.
This is also God's desire!

... not wanting anyone to perish ...
2 Peter 3:9b (BSB)

In Christ, we have a glorious calling!
OUR MISSION is to fulfil that calling!

... as you look forward to the day of God and **speed its coming.**
2 Peter 3:12a (NIV)

Many things must happen before Jesus will return.
We don't know what point we are in the timeline; but...

We have the opportunity to participate in these things!

Time to RETURN!

★ This means: **Our actions really matter!** ★
(Following Jesus is a call to action, not inactivity.)

OUR MISSION...

LIVE a life of LOVE, in the LIGHT of Jesus' coming!

... as you look forward to the day of God and **speed its coming.**
2 Peter 3:12a (NIV)

✓ **PRAY for Jesus' coming.** } An expression of **LOVE for GOD!**
✓ **LIVE for Jesus' coming.** }

✓ **HELP OTHERS PREPARE for Jesus' coming.** } An expression of **LOVE for PEOPLE!**

Though not our focus today, it seems that the wicked may also have an influence on the timing of Jesus' return.

As God's people are doing things that "speed up Jesus' coming," the wicked may be becoming so wicked that God won't tolerate them anymore.

TWO SPECIFIC THINGS ARE MENTIONED HERE:

[The Day of the Lord] will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness—the son of destruction—is revealed.
2 Thessalonians 2:3b (BSB)

SOME GENERAL TRENDS (PERHAPS MORE INTENSE AT THE VERY END):

... in the last days ... people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, slanderers, without self-control, savage, opposed to what is good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, loving pleasure rather than loving God.
2 Timothy 3:1b, 2-4 (NET)

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