

END-TIMES ISSUES

#5 The Good News and "speeding" Jesus' coming.

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*Those who belong to Jesus can look forward to his return...
>> AND <<
Have an opportunity to "speed its 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.
We have the opportunity to participate in those things.**

★ This means: Our actions really matter! ★

2

Things connected to "speeding its coming":

- 1. Praying for it.**
 - Found in other passages – as a command (Matthew 6:9-10; Luke 11:2) and as a prayer expressing the person's desire (1 Corinthians 16:22b; Revelation 22:20b).
- 2. Pursuing a holy and godly life.**
 - Found in the context of this passage (2 Peter 3) – as a command. Also found throughout the New Testament, as both commands and statements of fact (Ephesians 4:22-24; 1 John 3:2-3).
 - In 2 Peter 3, characteristics such as holiness and godliness are associated with an *eager anticipation* of Jesus' return (as seen in 2 Peter 3:11-14).

[These two points are from last time.]

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3. Sharing the Good News.

- It's *implied* in 2 Peter 3:9 – a passage which reveals the heart of God for the unsaved. (If we are Jesus' followers, this should also be the expression of *our hearts*.)
- It's *commanded* in many other Scripture passages (examples will be given later).

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise [of coming back], as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but **[wanting] everyone to come to repentance**.
2 Peter 3:9 (NIV)

- This involves desiring (and encouraging) others to get ready for Jesus' return. Those who *fail* to get ready will face horrible – yet well-deserved – consequences.

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↻ All three of these are expressions of love, linked to a desire to "speed up" Jesus' coming!

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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ PRAY for Jesus' coming. ✓ LIVE for Jesus' coming (by pursuing holiness). 	}	An expression of LOVE for GOD!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ HELP OTHERS PREPARE for Jesus' coming. 	}	An expression of LOVE for PEOPLE!

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[OUR FOCUS TODAY.]

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

★ This involves sharing the Good News with them (and teaching them to obey Jesus). ★

Consider this:

[God] is patient with you, **not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance**.
2 Peter 3:9b (NIV); see also 1 Timothy 2:4.

YOU have benefitted from God's patience. Do you want others to *also* benefit from it? (God desires it... do you?)

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HERE are the facts.

1. It's God's desire that people would *repent*, rather than *perish*.

- Even in the Old Testament, this was his desire.

As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. **I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live.**

Ezekiel 33:11b (NLT); God's desire is also mentioned in 2 Peter 3.

- This opportunity to repent will someday come to an end.

For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come **unexpectedly, like a thief in the night.**

... disaster will fall on them as **suddenly** as a pregnant woman's labor pains begin. And there will be **no escape.**

1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3b (NLT); this suddenness is also mentioned in 2 Peter 3.

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2. There appears to be a direct connection between the **salvation of people and Jesus' return.** This also implies the *ending* of any opportunity for those who *haven't* repented.

- **FIRST**, there will come a time when the "full number" of Gentiles chosen by God have been saved.

A hardening in part has come to Israel, **until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.**

Romans 11:25b (BSB)

- **SECOND**, Peter indicates that if Israel *as a nation* repents, Jesus will return. (Paul says that this will someday happen – Romans 11:26-27.)

Therefore **repent** and turn back so that your sins may be wiped out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and **so that he may send the Messiah appointed for you—that is, Jesus.**

Acts 3:19-20 (NET)

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3. The **need for us to proclaim the Good News is a common theme in the New Testament.** This includes commands, facts, prophetic statements, etc.

FIRST, AN OBSERVATION. All of the following commands and statements are about the Good News. But they do not all describe it the same way. Some may emphasize "believe"; others may emphasize "repent" or "(become a) disciple." Their purpose is to make a brief statement, NOT to explain the full nature of what it means to become saved.

- **AN OBLIGATION, TO BE DONE NOW (#1).**

[Jesus] told them, "Go into all the world and **preach the Good News to everyone.**

Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned."

Mark 16:15-16 (NLT)

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- **AN OBLIGATION, TO BE DONE NOW (#2).**

Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.

Therefore, **go and make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20 (NLT)

IN MARK: Told to proclaim it; the people's response will determine whether or not they are saved.

IN MATTHEW: ① Jesus' power and presence; ② make disciples (followers of Jesus), baptize and teach them to obey Jesus.

IN BOTH: This is to be done *throughout the entire world* – a task that is *too great* for just the original apostles.

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- **A FACT – PROPHECY TO BE FULFILLED NOW (#1)** – "it will be done." (Perhaps also an implied command.)

[Jesus] said, "Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day.

It was also written **that this message would be proclaimed** in the authority of his name **to all the nations**, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.'

You are witnesses of all these things.

"And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until **the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven.**"

Luke 24:46-49 (NLT)

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- **A FACT – PROPHECY TO BE FULFILLED NOW (#2)** – "you will do it." (Perhaps also an implied command.)

"But **you will receive power** when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

And **you will be my witnesses**, telling people about me **everywhere**—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and **to the ends of the earth.**"

Acts 1:8 (NLT)

IN LUKE: ① It's the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy—even its proclamation to all "nations." ② The apostles witnessed these things. ③ They will be given the Spirit's power. (Implied: They are to testify about what they have seen.)

IN ACTS: They will be given power; they will testify about Jesus.

IN BOTH: The task is *too large* for the apostles to do by themselves. (It is *still* unfinished, today.)

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- **AN END-TIME OBLIGATION – PROPHECY** – "it *must* be done."

For the Good News **must first be preached to all nations.**
 Mark 13:10 (NLT)
- **AN END-TIME FACT – PROPHECY (#1)** – "it *will* be done."

And the Good News about the Kingdom **will be preached** throughout the whole world, so that **all nations will hear it**; and then the end will come.
 Matthew 24:14 (NLT)

IN BOTH ACCOUNTS: The *context* mentions: ① false teachers, apostasy and the lack of love; also, ② the need for God's people to remain faithful and to testify about Jesus, the likelihood of persecution for following Jesus, etc.

- **AN END-TIME FACT – PROPHECY (#2)** – described as happening.

And I saw another angel flying through the sky, **carrying the eternal Good News to proclaim** to the people who belong to this world—to **every nation, tribe, language, and people.**
 "Fear God," he shouted. "Give glory to him. For the time has come when he will sit as judge. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all the springs of water."
 Revelation 14:6-7 (NLT)

IN REVELATION: ① At this point, instead of saying judgment is *future*, the message is that judgment is *at hand*. *This is the last opportunity to get ready!* ② This summary lists some of the *foundational* issues of the Good News – God and judgment. (Compare to Acts 14:15-17; 17:24-31.) This is where people who *don't* know the Bible need to start. If they reject this, there is no reason to go further. ③ This is probably just a *summary*, with much more actually being said.

Question: In Revelation 14:6-7, WHO is proclaiming the Good News?


[An] **angel** flying ... carrying the eternal Good News to proclaim to the people ...
 Revelation 14:6a (NLT)

The issue is: How is this experienced by people on earth?
(This passage describes what John sees *in his vision*.)

- ① Does an **actual angel** go around the world, telling **billions** of people the Good News message?
 >> OR <<
- ② Are **God's people** involved – with the angel being either:
 Ⓐ a heavenly "counterpart," or Ⓑ a symbolic representation of what people are doing on earth?

Our suggested answer:
 God's people are probably involved in some manner.

Regardless of our conclusion on *this* passage, we've seen many other passages that (without question) *do* involve people.



* (PLUS SEVERAL BILLION ADDITIONAL PEOPLE WHO NEED TO BE TOLD.)

IF our proclaiming the Good News has an impact on "speeding up" Jesus' return...

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

THAT MEANS:
 ★ **Our actions really matter!** ★
 (We are doing God's will, whether or not the people become saved.)

But today's question is:
WHERE ARE WE, AS FAR AS FULFILLING THIS PROPHECY?
Have God's people been obeying this command?

Jesus' followers *have been* obeying his command to proclaim the Good News to all people!

⇒ **There have been successes and failures, gains and losses.**
But over-all, the answer has been "Yes!"

- ✓ Sometimes the church has been zealously following the Bible. At other times, it has been lukewarm and out-of-focus.
- ✓ In the earlier centuries, Christianity spread through much of Europe, Asia and North Africa. *Sometimes this included translating the Bible (normally just portions of it) into the language of the people.*
- ✓ Later, the church became more institutionalized and stagnant. **But God eventually changed this situation!**

⇒ As we look down through church history...

- ✓ We see that a lot has happened, both good (proclaiming the Good News, people being saved) and bad (apostasy and persecution – sometimes even persecution by apostate church-goers).
- ✓ There has always been an interest (at least by some) to share the Good News with others. *But in recent years, this interest has increased exponentially.*
- ✓ Today, it seems that the goal of sharing the Good News with every "people group" in the world may be reached within a few decades! *The task will be finished!*

DEFINITION OF "PEOPLE GROUP"

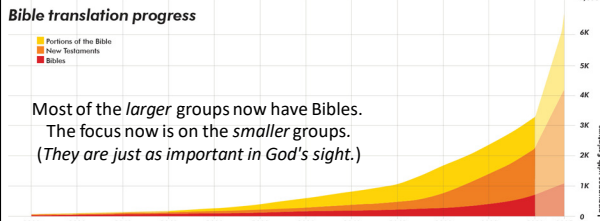
- ✓ Groups of people who share common linguistic and cultural characteristics that distinguish them from other such groups.

⇒ In recent years, God has been at work in ways not previously seen!

- ✓ In past centuries, the work tended to be much more difficult and limited in scope. *Then God providentially changed things!*
- ✓ HOW?
 - Through technological advances (beginning with the printing press).
 - Through a renewed interest in the Bible and in sharing the Good News with those who haven't heard.
- ✓ Since then, there has been an increasingly intense focus on getting the Good News to *everyone!*
- ✓ Consider the following chart, which shows how many "people groups" now have a Bible or Bible portion in their language:

Number of "people groups" that have been exposed to the message of the Bible! *

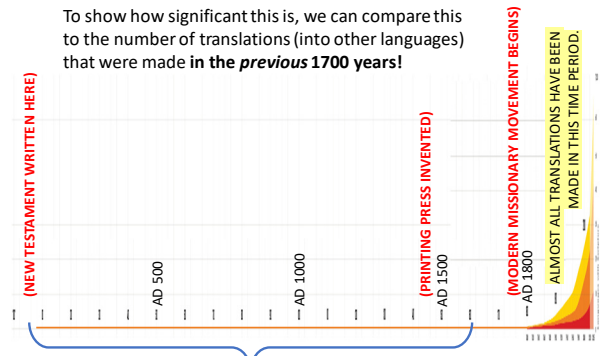
There are over 7000 known "people groups" in the world. In the last 200 years, nearly *half* of them have received at least *part* of the Bible in their own language.



Most of the *larger* groups now have Bibles. The focus now is on the *smaller* groups. (They are just as important in God's sight.)

* ("People groups" – Groups of people who have their own self-identity – culture, language, geography, etc.)

To show how significant this is, we can compare this to the number of translations (into other languages) that were made in the *previous 1700 years!*



A FEW TRANSLATIONS WERE MADE DURING THIS TIME (MOSTLY SCRIPTURE PORTIONS, NOW OBSOLETE, DUE TO LANGUAGE CHANGES).

⇒ Does this mean we can predict when Jesus will come?

After all, it seems that the goal could be reached in the next couple decades.

⇒ ⇒ ⇒ We can say that the time is getting *much* closer, but that's about all we can say.

- God may reach some of the "unreached" *sooner* than we expect, through their interaction with people of other languages.
- Once all groups are exposed to the truth, God may delay Jesus' return, so that *more of them* have opportunity to be saved!



★ Our job is to simply do our job, and let God deal with the other details and any unknown factors. ★

⇒ This *doesn't* mean all people will become saved.

- They will have the truth. The day is coming – possibly soon – when *all* people will have been exposed to the truth (or at least have the *opportunity* to hear it). At that point, we can probably say that the prophecy about "all nations" has been fulfilled.
- Many will reject it. Scripture also warns us that a day will come when people will *stop* being willing to repent. Hearts will become hardened to the truth.
 - ✓ Instead of repenting, they will be filled with *rage* against God for punishing them for their sin.
 - ✓ Most likely, they won't even admit that it is sin.

[Those] not killed by these plagues **still did not repent** of the works of their hands. They did not stop worshiping demons and idols ... Furthermore, they **did not repent** of their murder, sorcery, sexual immorality, and theft.

Revelation 9:20b, 21 (BSB)

- Eventually they will recognize that the judgments are from **God**. And they will *still* refuse to repent.

... they **cursed the name of God**, who had authority over these plagues; yet they **did not repent** and give Him glory.

[They began to] **curse the God of heaven** for their pains and sores; yet they **did not repent** of their deeds.

Revelation 16:9b, 11 (BSB)

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OUR MISSION!

We need to keep our focus!

We have the opportunity to be a part of "speeding up" Jesus' coming –

⇒ Doing whatever our own gifts and abilities enable us to do so (and *all* Christians have gifts and abilities).

⇒ *Knowing that all that we do in the Lord has value!*

Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that **your labor in the Lord is not in vain**.

1 Corinthians 15:58b (NIV)

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Credits

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- Chart about Bible Translations – From personal correspondence with Wycliffe Bible translators, UK, October 2023.

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