

## **Hastening the Coming of the Day of the Lord** **2 Peter 3:12**

Some translations have replaced “hastening” with “earnestly desiring.” This Greek word is rarely used, so references are few. However, all the other references clearly impart the concept of speed rather than desire. The Greek word is “speudo.”

- Luke 2:16 They came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.
- Luke 19:5 – 6 And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.
- Acts 20:16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have time to spend in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.
- Acts 22:18 And saw Him saying to me, “Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.”
- Septuagint Isaiah 16:5 “In mercy the throne will be established; and One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness.”

Can people speed up or slow down what God wants to get done?

- Jonah was told to go to Nineveh (1:1 – 3). His first reaction was to run the other way. When he finally arrived at Nineveh (3:1 – 3), obviously he arrived later than he would have had he started in the right direction the first time. Jonah delayed the message and, as a result, their repentance. A bad choice delayed God’s judgment (and mercy, in this case).
- In Genesis 15:16, Abram is told that his descendants would not inherit the land until the fourth generation because “the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” In this case, not-so-bad behavior delayed God’s judgment.
- In Daniel 9, Daniel began to pray concerning the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy (9:2). In chapter 10, he prayed for understanding. After three weeks, an angel came to explain the situation (10:4), that the angel was having a difficult time getting the king of Persia to go along with the plan (10:13, 10:20). In this case, God promised that Israel would return, but the political decision to grant it was delayed by a stubborn king.
- Other examples show that God changed His mind, so God either sped up or delayed His plans in response to faithful people: Adam (Genesis 2:19), Noah (Genesis 6:6), Abraham (Genesis 22:12), Moses (Exodus 32:9 – 14, Numbers 14:11 – 20, Numbers 16:20 – 35, 41 – 48, Deuteronomy 9:13 – 29), Judges 10:13 – 16, 2 Samuel 24:10 – 25, Isaiah 5:2 – 5), Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:1 – 5), Jeremiah 3:6 – 7, 7:31, 29:11, 32:35, Daniel 10:12 – 14, Jonah 3:4, 10.
- Sometimes, when God promised that something would happen at a certain time (e.g., 70 years), the satisfaction of the prediction had some latitude (within the year). Other predictions (resurrected on the third day, denying Jesus three times before a rooster crowed) had less flexibility. It seems that God reduced His risk exposure inherent in very specific predictions by not relying on people to get things done. Further, God did not promise things in which He would need to infringe on free will to accomplish.

The context of 2 Peter 3:9 – 13 clearly refers to the end of the material universe, Judgment Day. In what way could Christians “speed” this Day of the Lord?

- A major reason for Christians to be on earth is to grow faith in others
  - Philippians 1:21 – 25 Paul’s reason for desiring to stay on earth was to grow faith in others.
  - 2 Corinthians 5:11 Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.
  - 2 Corinthians 5:20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.
- God provided significant help to those spreading the gospel, including sending Christians to specific people who needed to hear: Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8), Peter to Cornelius (Acts 10), Paul to Macedonia (Acts 16:6 – 10).
- God made sure that the entire world heard the good news (Romans 10:14 – 21)
- Those who may develop faith in the future exist
  - Those who cannot understand are not judged (John 9:41). Young people constantly grow up, transitioning to accountable status.
  - Initiating faith takes time and consideration (Acts 17:11)
- God declined to destroy the Canaanite tribes, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the entire world population by flood (and others) until either no God-fearers were left or until all God-fearers were rescued.
- A reasonable conclusion is that the present world will continue until there are no more hearts considering faith. God knows the hearts of people, so He knows who is not totally hardened (which was His conclusion about the Canaanites, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the people of Noah’s time). In this way, God can justly end the world because the righteous will have been rescued already whereas the remainder would not change anyway.
- Therefore, we hasten the coming of the Lord by not delaying (as did Jonah) the message, but quickly reaching all the willing hearts so that we can all go home. Note that my delay, while a black mark against me, is not likely to result in the loss to another. God will send someone else (or will send me again after partial digestion).