

TAXOS: AN EXEGESIS OF REVELATION 1:1

ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΙΣ ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ 1:1 Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ, ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει, καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἀποστείλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννῃ...

REVELATION 1:1 (CSB) The revelation of Jesus Christ that God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John

THE QUESTION

The question we're addressing asks what is meant by the phrase "*what must soon take place*".

LEXICAL ANALYSIS

A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament (p. 258):

τάχος, quickness; ἐν τάχει, **adverbially, speedily, quickly.**

The Lexham Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament:

τάχος (tachos), short time; soon; speed

A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible (Vol. 1, p. 71):

τάχος tachōs, takh'-os; a brief space (of time), i.e. in haste: + quickly, + shortly, + speedily.

Thayer's Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament (p. 616):

τάχος, -ους, τό, quickness, speed: ἐν τάχει, quickly, shortly, Acts 12:7; 22:18; [25:4]; Ro. 16:20; speedily, soon, Lk. 18:8; 1 Tim. 3:14; Rev. 1:1; 22:6.

The NET Bible First Edition Notes (Re 1:1):

BDAG 992–93 s.v. τάχος has “quickly, at once, without delay Ac 10:33 D; 12:7; 17:15 D; 22:18; 1 Cl 48:1; 63:4 ... soon, in a short time ... Rv 1:1; 22:6 ... shortly Ac 25:4.”

Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words:

ταχύς, #5036, “swift, speedy,” is used in Jas. 1:19, “therefore, my beloved brothers, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.”

Helps Word-Studies: (<http://biblehub.com/str/greek/5034.htm>)

Cognate: #5034 táxos – swiftness (speed), i.e. done as quickly (speedily) as is appropriate to the particular situation.

CONCLUSIONS FROM LEXICAL ANALYSIS

The adverbial expression “ἐν τάχει” has strong support suggesting the meaning “hastily, speedily, quickly”, indicating that the events spoken of will take place as “hastily”, “speedily”, or “quickly” as is appropriate to the particular situation rather than taking place soon in the chronological sense of the word.

τάχος measures the "speed or hastiness" in which an event must take place, not necessarily "when" something should take place.

Theologically this agrees with Matthew 24:22 and 24:34, where the Lord speaks of the shortening the time during which these things must take place for the sake of the elect and completing these events within the span of one generation.

EXAMPLE OF OLD TESTAMENT AND HISTORIC USE

The First Letter of Clement to the Corinthians:

Μωϋσέως γὰρ ἀναβάντος εἰς τὸ ὄρος καὶ ποιήσαντος τεσσαράκοντα ἡμέρας καὶ τεσσαράκοντα νύκτας ἐν νηστείᾳ καὶ ταπεινώσει, εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ θεός· Κατάβηθι τὸ **τάχος** ἐντεῦθεν, ὅτι ἠνόμησεν ὁ λαός σου, οὓς ἐξήγαγες ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου· παρέβησαν **ταχύ** ἐκ τῆς ὁδοῦ ἧς ἐντείλω αὐτοῖς, ἐποίησαν ἑαυτοῖς χωνεύματα.

For Moses, having gone up to the mountain and having spent forty days and forty nights in fasting and humiliation, God said to him, “Go down **quickly** from here, because your people whom you led out of the land of Egypt broke the law. They have deviated **quickly** from the way which you commanded them; they cast for themselves molten images.”

Clement quotes Deuteronomy 9:12:

(LXX) καὶ εἶπεν κύριος πρὸς με ἀνάστηθι κατάβηθι τὸ **τάχος** ἐντεῦθεν ὅτι ἠνόμησεν ὁ λαός σου οὓς ἐξήγαγες ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου παρέβησαν **ταχύ** ἐκ τῆς ὁδοῦ ἧς ἐνετείλω αὐτοῖς ἐποίησαν ἑαυτοῖς χώνευμα

ESV: Then the LORD said to me, ‘Arise, go down **quickly** from here, for your people whom you have brought from Egypt have acted corruptly. They have turned aside **quickly** out of the way that I commanded them; they have made themselves a metal image.’

Both Clement and the Septuagint used **τάχος** to render the Hebrew word mahar. Analysis of mahar shows the following results:

New international dictionary of Old Testament theology & exegesis (Vol. 2, p. 858):

מָהָר (māhar I), **piel**: which means to hurry, do quickly, in a hurry; **niph'al**: or be hasty, impetuous; **adjective**: מְהִיר (māhîr), skilled, experienced; **nominative**: מְהֵרָא (mehērâ), speed, hurry, quickly, in a hurry.

Ancient Near East: The verb is widely attested. **Arab**: mahara, to be skilled; **Ethiopian**: māharä, to train, teach; **Syiac**: mehar, idem. The connection between these cognates and the verb may be manifest in the use of the verb to describe a skilled scribe; the one who is skilled executes his tasks quickly.

Old Testament: In the piel stem, the verb can mean to rush, to go or come quickly. Abraham rushes into his tent (Gen 18:6). A fool who goes impatiently after an adultress is compared to a bird that rushes to a snare (Prov 7:23). Judgment, too, can rush in this manner; so Jer 48:16, on the coming calamity to befall Moab. The infinitive form of the verb is used to describe the warriors from Gad who joined David in 1 Chron 12:8 [9]: “They were as swift as gazelles in the mountains.”

The Lord’s command to Moses was not for him to go down “immediately” or “soon” in the chronological sense, but to hurry down “hastily” or “quickly”. Moses is being told to rush down to his people because they have quickly gone astray!

COMPARISONS AND USAGE

This use of τάχος within scripture is well supported:

Luke 18:8 (CSB) I tell you that he will swiftly grant them justice. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

In Jesus' discourse on end-times events from Luke He says that God's vengeance for the sake of the martyrs would be speedily executed upon the world when He comes. Jesus is not setting a time-frame for His return, but rather, describing the nature of His return as executing judgment swiftly.

This foreshadows what is spoken of in Revelation 6:9-11, 17 where the Lord will pour out His wrath upon the earth to avenge those who were "killed for the word of God and for the testimony which they held"; there will be "hail and fire mingled with blood" cast upon the earth that will burn up a third of the earth's vegetation (8:7), a third of the sea becoming blood and killing a third of oceanic life (8:8-9), and a third of the earth's fresh water will become poisonous (8:10-11); and these are only the first three trumpets!

Therefore, Jesus is speaking of how swiftly and decisively "the day of vengeance of our God" (Isaiah 61:2) will be! The events spoken of in Revelation will not be drawn out over 100's or 1,000's of years.

James speaks to the readiness of our character:

James 1:19 (CSB) My dear brothers and sisters, understand this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger

James means that Christians should be ready and willing to listen, but slow in speech and unwilling to become angry.

A further survey of NT usage will continue to illustrate the same point.

DOCTRINE AND APPLICATION

The idea that these words convey the swiftness – not the time – in which these events will take place is vital to end times eschatology because Jesus told us that "when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:28); the events described in Revelation will follow rapidly in sequence but were not promised to come chronologically "soon" after Jesus gave the revelation to John.

More properly understood, my conclusion is that Jesus has promised to carry out the events spoken of in Revelation as hastily and speedily as possible so that the difficulty of those times is not prolonged on the earth. Any study into the Book of Revelation should inspire gratitude in our hearts for this promise to hastily fulfill these events once they begin.

A COMPARISON OF REVELATION 1:1 IN THE GREEK AND ENGLISH

Strong's	Transliteration	Greek	English
602 [e]	Apokalypsis	Ἀποκάλυψις	[The] Revelation
2424 [e]	Iēsou	Ἰησοῦ	of Jesus
5547 [e]	Christou	Χριστοῦ,	Christ,
3739 [e]	hēn	ἣν	which
1325 [e]	edōken	ἔδωκεν	gave
846 [e]	autō	αὐτῷ	to him
3588 [e]	ho	ὁ	-
2316 [e]	Theos	Θεός,	God,
1166 [e]	deixai	δειξαι	to show
3588 [e]	tois	τοῖς	to the
1401 [e]	doulois	δούλοις	bond-servants
846 [e]	autou	αὐτοῦ	of him,
3739 [e]	ha	ἃ	what things
1163 [e]	dei	δεῖ	it behoves
1096 [e]	genesthai	γενέσθαι	to take place
1722 [e]	en	ἐν	in
5034 [e]	tachei	τάχει,	quickness.
2532 [e]	kai	καί	and
4591 [e]	esēmanen	ἐσήμανεν	he signified [it],
649 [e]	aposteilas	ἀποστείλας	having sent
1223 [e]	dia	διὰ	through
3588 [e]	tou	τοῦ	the
32 [e]	angelou	ἀγγέλου	angel
846 [e]	autou	αὐτοῦ,	of him,
3588 [e]	tō	τῷ	to the
1401 [e]	doulō	δούλῳ	servant
846 [e]	autou	αὐτοῦ	of him,
2491 [e]	Iōannē	Ἰωάννη*,	John,

<http://biblehub.com/text/revelation/1-1.htm>