

## ~Does "Soon" Mean "Soon"?~

**The book of Revelation in the King James version of the Bible begins with this prologue:**

*"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must **shortly** come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for **the time is at hand.**" (Rev. 1:1-3)*

Many scholars have demonstrated that Revelation was probably written in the mid-sixties AD. Proponents of this date are in a position to offer historical events as a possible fulfillment: the devastation of Judea culminating in the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. However, most Bible students have accepted a mid-nineties AD date for this prophecy. Since no events from the year 90 through to the present appear to qualify as the fulfillment, they conclude that Revelation can't be fulfilled. This introduces tremendous tension: How can "shortly" be reconciled with a prophecy that remains unfulfilled after more than 2100 years?

Some suggest the original Greek for "**shortly**" does not really mean that at all -- it means "**suddenly.**" It's argued that thousands of years might elapse before the events of Revelation are fulfilled, but when they do take place, they will occur suddenly. This interpretation is offered to defuse the sense of urgency any unbiased reader would naturally be feeling upon reading "things which must shortly come to pass." But should we not hesitate to discard the work of the translators? If "shortly" means "suddenly," why did they agree on "shortly?" Granted, no translation is perfect. However, numerous versions have been produced over the last four centuries and they consistently reaffirm the King James interpretation of the Greek:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must **shortly** take place...Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for **the time is near.** (Rev. 1:1-3, **NASB**)

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must **soon** take place...Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because **the time is near.** (Rev. 1:1-3, **NIV**)

Popular prophecy writers and T.V. evangelists consistently promote the "suddenly" interpretation, but translators steadfastly refuse to cooperate. The eminently qualified scholars behind our modern New International Version have not given an inch on this issue. They have rendered the Greek for "shortly" as "soon" -- not a hint of support for the "suddenly" proponents. Even if we relent and accept "suddenly" as the intended meaning, we soon collide with another obstacle in verse 3: "...the time is at hand." The NIV renders it, "...the time is near." What now? Have four centuries of Bible translators been wrong on this too? Perhaps we should be suspicious when someone claiming to understand Revelation can't get past the introduction without radically redefining keywords. John's vision came with a sobering warning:

"...if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book."

Some don't consider taking words away from scripture to be an issue as long as they insert their own words as substitutes. Readers are cautioned to carefully consider the consequences should it turn out that God does not approve of this practice: "God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." No doubt, some will carelessly assume this does not mean what it says either.

The futurist often prides himself on taking things literally, and yet, when confronted with clear time texts, this literality is abandoned and the doctrine of "imminence" is fabricated out of whole cloth. These same people state that Jesus' Second Coming is "soon" and "near," and expect us to understand by those words what they normally mean. Yet, these same people when they encounter these same words in sacred Scripture do an 'about face'. They say that God meant "it could be soon," or "it may be near." But God did not say that. He said, "at hand - soon - some standing here will not taste death - the generation will not pass away (in case we were really thick, which obviously we are) - near - shortly - quickly." **God pretty much exhausted the Greek language for synonyms for saying that something was going to happen in the first century, and yet most of the Church denies it and puts words in God's mouth.** Strong words? Yes, but this cuts to the heart of the test of a true prophet. If a prophet gives express time limitations for the fulfillment of his prophecy, it is circumventing the Deuteronomy 18 test to ignore those limitations.

QUESTION: Is it really clear that the New Testament writers thought Jesus would return in their lifetime?

ANSWER: **Yes. Read what they say:**

- **Rom. 13:12**, "The night is nearly over; the day is **almost here**."
- **I Cor. 7:29 and 31**, "The **time is short**. This world in its present form **is passing away**."
- **I Cor. 10:11**, "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages **has come**."
- **I Thess. 5:23**, "May your whole spirit, soul and **body** be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- **Hebrews 10:37**, "In just a **very little while**, He who is coming will come and **will not delay**."
- **James 5:8**, "The Lord's coming **is near**."
- **James 5:9**, "The judge is **standing at the door**."
- **I Peter 4:7**, "The end of all things **has drawn near**."

**Rom 16:20**

The God of peace will **soon** crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

**Rev 1:1**

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must **soon** take place; and He sent and communicated {it} by His angel to His bond-servant John,

**Rev 22:6**

And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must **soon** take place.  
(NAU)

The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must **soon** take place."  
(NIV)

**5034 tachos (takh'-os);**

from the same as 5036; a brief space (of time), i.e. (with 1722 prefixed) in haste:  
KJV-- + quickly, + shortly, + speedily.  
Thayer/Strong

**Revelation 1:1-2 PP13**

[Soon]: this indicates that the events portrayed in the visions will take place within the lifetime of John, a **relatively short period of time** (see <Rev 2:16>; and verse <3:11>; also verse <22:6>).  
(from UBS Translator Handbook Series)

**PAROUSIA**

The end was not to be expected instantly. There were still signs to come to pass <2 Thes 2:3>, and, in particular, the determined number of martyrs must be filled up (<Rev 6:11>; compare 2 Esd 4:35,36). There was need of patience (<James 5:7>, etc.; compare 2 Esd 4:34; Bar 83:4). But it was at hand (<1 Pet 4:7; Rev 1:3; 22:10>; compare 2 Esd 14:17). "Yet a little while" <Heb 10:37,25>, "The night was far spent" <Rom 13:12>, "The Lord was at hand" <Phil 4:5>. "We that are alive" expect to see it (<1 Thes 4:15; 1 Cor 15:51>; compare Bar 76:5); the time is shortened henceforth (<1 Cor 7:29>; compare Bar 20:1; 2 Esd 4:26, and the commentaries on 1 Cor). Indeed, there was hardly time for repentance even (<Rev 22:11>, ironical), certainly there was no time left for self-indulgence (1 Thes <5:3>; <1 Pet 4:2; 2 Pet 3:11; Rev 3:3>; compare Bar 83:5), and watchfulness was urgently demanded <1 Thes 5:6; Rev 3:3>.  
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**In short, 'soon' means 'soon'!**