

# Analysis of the Greek Word *ταχύς* (*tachys*) By Daniel Rogers (labornotinvain.com)

## Introduction

The Greek word *tachys* is one of the key words used in Revelation 22 that modifies the timing of the coming of the Lord. Three times (verses 7, 12, and 20) John records that Jesus would come *quickly*. The majority of interpretations of Revelation, however, can not be valid because they do not fit within the restraints placed upon the book by the word *quickly*, so some have interpreted this word as *fast* or *speedily* in the sense of *velocity* and not *imminence*. This short study serves as a survey of *tachys* to determine if this interpretation is valid. Since I am not an expert in the Greek text or a son of an expert in the Greek text, all my work in this essay is validated, double-checked, and approved by Dr. Dallas Burdette (<https://freedominchrist.net>) who has had multiple years of training in Greek and has even taught the original languages himself.

The word *tachys* is used as an adjective in James 1:19; otherwise, it is used in the neuter singular as the adverb (*tachy*).<sup>1</sup> It is used thirteen times in the New Testament and fifty-four times in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures called the Septuagint (LXX). To be thorough, one must evaluate the entire Bible, and, if given enough time, closely examine every instance. In our case, we will rely on lexical and contextual information, but I will provide a list of references for your own research.

Another thing that needs to be taken into consideration in linguistic studies is the root of a word. In this case, *tachys* is the root of several words in the Greek including *ταχέως* (*tacheōs*), *τάχος* (*tachos*), *τάχα* (*tacha*), and *ταχινός* (*tachinos*). A section of this paper will be dedicated to examining these words as well.

Finally, in any study of language, it must also be understood that the meaning of a word is ultimately determined by the context in which it is used. The final section of this essay will look at the Book of Revelation to determine the meaning of the word in its original context.

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<sup>1</sup> Balz, Horst Robert, and Gerhard Schneider. *Exegetical dictionary of the New Testament* 1990– : n. pag. Print.

## **Tachys in the Bible**

Before examining the New Testament passages in which our word is used, let's first consult the Lexicons.

### **Lexical Information**

In *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG), the following definition is given:

(1) Pertaining to a very brief period of time, with focus on speed of an activity or an event. (2) Pertaining to a relatively brief time subsequent to another point of time.<sup>2</sup>

Next, a definition from *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (EDNT): As an adjective (*tachys*): "fast, swift". It is only used as an adjective in James 1:19. As an adverb (*tachy*), it is used twelve other times, such as in Revelation 22, and it means, "soon, in a short time, or immediately thereafter (Mark 9:39), quickly, immediately, without delay (Matthew 5:25, 28:7,8 ["Depart quickly; cf. Mark 16:8]; Luke 15:22; John 11:29)."<sup>3</sup>

Finally, we turn to the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*: "pertaining to a very short extent of time—'quickly, hurriedly, swift, speedy.'"<sup>4</sup> One interesting example they give is of Judas' betrayal of Jesus in John 13:27: "'what you are about to do, do it quickly [*tacheōs* - DR]' Jn 13:27. Again, the emphasis is upon the brief period of time before Judas is to do what he had set out to do."

In conclusion, *tachy* means "a very brief period of time, with focus on speed of an activity or an event." So, it does mean *fast*, but it also pertains to *imminence* and not simply *velocity*. Revelation 22, then, claims on the surface that Jesus would come both soon and speedily.

### **New Testament Usage**

*Tachys/ tachy* is used thirteen times in the New Testament: Matthew 5:25, 28:7-8; Mark 9:39; Luke 15:22; John 11:29; James 1:19; Revelation 2:16, 3:11, 11:14, 22:7, 12, 20. In the above verses, it is translated *quick* or *quickly* 12 times and *soon* once (Matthew 9:39)

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<sup>2</sup> Arndt, William et al. *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* 2000 : n. pag. Print.

<sup>3</sup> Balz, Horst Robert, and Gerhard Schneider. *Exegetical dictionary of the New Testament* 1990- : n. pag. Print.

<sup>4</sup> Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida. *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* 1996 : n. pag. Print.

in the New American Standard Bible. Out of those thirteen times, it appears in Revelation six times, and it is translated *quickly* in every instance.

From the information provided above, the word conveys both imminence and speed. From John's perspective, the events within his writings would happen very soon. As Paul added in 1 Corinthians 15, not only were the events at hand, but they would happen "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" (1 Corinthians 15:52; cf. Revelation 10:5-7).

## LXX Usage

Ge 27:20; Ex 32:8; Dt 9:12; 11:17; 28:20; Jos 8:18, 19; Jdg 2:17; 9:54; 2 Kgdms 17:16; Esd B 7:6; Ps 36:2; 68:18; 78:8; 101:3; 137:3; 142:7; Pr 12:19; 20:19; 29:20; Ec 4:12; 8:11; Is 5:26; 9:1; 13:22; 32:4; 49:17; 51:5; 58:8; Je 31:16; 29:20; Eze 29:5; Na 1:14; Zep 1:14; Mal 3:5; Sir 5:11; 6:7, 19, 20; 19:4; 21:22; 48:20; 1 Mac 2:40; 11:22; 2 Mac 3:31; 4:31; 5:21; 7:37; 14:11; Esd A 4:34; 3 Mac 2:20; 4 Mac 4:5; Ps Sol 4:6

## Related Words

All the below results are from the New American Standard Bible. Sometimes, a word is in the manuscript, but the translators may combine multiple Greek words into one English word for clarity. For example, in Romans 16:20, the word *tachos* is used in the manuscript, but it doesn't have an English word in its place in the NASB.

### ταχέως (tacheōs)

*Tacheōs* is found fifteen times in the New Testament. It has a variety of translations including *quickly* (5), *soon* (3), *shortly* (2), *at once* (1), *faster* (1), *as soon as possible* (1), *hastily* (1), and *sooner* (1).

Lk 14:21; 16:6; Jn 11:31; 13:27; 20:4; Ac 17:15; 1 Co 4:19; Ga 1:6; Php 2:19, 24; 2 Th 2:2; 1 Ti 5:22; 2 Ti 4:9; Heb 13:19, 23

### τάχος (tachos)

*Tachos* is found only seven times. It is translated *quickly* (3), *soon* (2), *shortly* (1), and *before long* (1).

Lk 18:8; Ac 12:7; 22:18; 25:4; Ro 16:20; 1 Ti 3:14; Re 1:1; 22:6

### τάχα (tacha)

*Tacha* is translated *perhaps* twice, and it isn't relevant to our study: Romans 5:7; Philemon 15.

## ταχινός (tachinos)

*Tachinos* is also found twice, and it is translated *imminent* and *swift*.

2 Peter 1:14, 2:1

### Conclusion to Our Study of Related Words

From the above, it is obvious that *tachys* is used as a root word to convey the idea of imminence. It carries with it a sense of urgency in both time and speed. Using this information, we will proceed to the third and final section.

### Contextual Examination of *Tachy* in Revelation

In this section, we will begin by assuming that *tachy* is only about velocity even though there is little to no support for that conclusion. The reason I am comfortable allowing this is because the three *quickly* passages in Revelation 22 are not the only three texts which affirm the imminence of the events within the book. Notice the following texts:

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, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. 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**. (Revelation 1:1–3)

Do not fear **what you are about to suffer**. Behold, **the devil is about to** cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Revelation 2:10)

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**. (Revelation 22:6)

And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, **for the time is near**.” (Revelation 22:10)

While there are other arguments to be made, these are sufficient. With this much evidence, you can see why the “*quickly* passages” are unnecessary to make the point. It seems to me that questioning the legitimacy of the translation *quickly* ends up

distracting one from the plethora of other evidence supporting a preterist<sup>5</sup> interpretation of Revelation.

That being said, when we consult the lexicons as well as the use of the passage elsewhere, it is plain to see why BDAG defines the word as “Pertaining to a very brief period of time, with focus on speed of an activity or an event.” In the EDNT, there is an additional comment that could be of some help to us: “[*tachy* - DR] occurs 6 times in Revelation in the phrase ἔρχομαι ταχύ [*coming quickly* - DR] (2:16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:7, 12, 20; also 2:5 Koine and elsewhere) as a word of both consolation and admonition.” This expression is used as a word of encouragement to living Christians who were undergoing a great deal of persecution.

To remove the events from their day and their time is to take away the comfort that John wished to instill within them through the promise of a soon-to-come Messiah. This encouragement mirrors that of Paul:

For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and **to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven** with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (2 Thessalonians 1:6–8)

Paul promised that they would receive relief from their persecution at the coming of the Lord when their persecutors would receive the same affliction that they had pressured the saints with. This theme of the vindication of the martyrs is persistent throughout Revelation, and it is yet another reason why I believe the book has been fulfilled. After all, Jesus had promised that the fall of Jerusalem would mean justice for every martyr back to Abel (Matthew 23:34-38; cf. Revelation 18:24).

## Conclusion

According to the Lexicons, usage of common words, and the context, it is undeniable that *tachy* means *soon with speed*. It is a word that modifies both the *velocity* and the *imminence* of the event in question. In this case, Jesus’ coming would be *at hand* and *quick*. This matches other comments made by Jesus such as in Matthew 24:27, 34 when Jesus says that His coming would be like a flash of lightning while also affirming

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<sup>5</sup> *Preterist* means “past,” and it refers to an interpretation of Revelation that holds that all things within the book have been fulfilled.

it would happen within that generation. Again, it would be soon and with great speed. The arrival of Christ would be so sudden, in fact, that those who did not know to look for the signs or who tarried leaving the city, would perish within (Matthew 24:15-22).

I pray that this study has been profitable to you. When I first started studying Revelation seriously, I was overwhelmed by the number of times statements. Ultimately, they convinced me that the book was about to be fulfilled after John wrote. If you would like additional information concerning this interpretation of Revelation, I invite you to visit my website listed in the subtitle. God bless.