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**Soon - Already, Now,
and Soon: A Forgotten
Key in Revelation**



By Dan Maines

Already, Now, and Soon: A Forgotten Key in Revelation

Let's look at a verse in Revelation that many overlook. A verse that unlocks the timeline of the entire book. It is Revelation 1:19, where the Lord Jesus commands John:

"Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things." (Revelation 1:19 NASB)

There are three time frames here, past, present, and shortly coming future.

1. **The things you have seen** - that's the past. John is told to write what he has already seen, likely referring to the vision of the glorified Christ in verses 12-18.
2. **The things which are** - that's the present. John is writing to real churches dealing with real situations at that very time.
3. **The things which will take place after these things** - that's the future from John's perspective, but not a distant future. These are things soon to come after the present moment in his day.

This tells us something critical: *not everything in Revelation was future when John wrote it*. Much had already happened. Much was happening. And much was just about to happen. So when someone comes along and says the bulk of Revelation is about events 2,000 or 3,000 years removed from John's day, we must ask: where are they getting that? Because it's not from the text. It's not from Revelation 1:19.

Jesus even repeats this idea of imminence throughout the book:

"The time is near." (Revelation 1:3 NASB)

"Behold, I am coming quickly." (Revelation 3:11 NASB)

"Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near." (Revelation 22:10 NASB)

If we take Jesus seriously, we must also take His timeline seriously. If He said it was near, it was near.

Let's now consider one of the judgments often misunderstood, the sixth bowl judgment in Revelation 16:

"The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way

would be prepared for the kings from the east." (Revelation 16:12 NASB)

Some interpret this symbolically, and others historically. But either way, the imagery has roots in real world events. When Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon in 539 B.C., he diverted the Euphrates River, marched under the city wall, and took Babylon without a fight. That same imagery is used here, the drying up of a river to allow an invasion.

But now, Babylon isn't literal Babylon. In Revelation, Babylon is a symbol and I believe, as do many others, that it represents Jerusalem. Not Rome. Not the Vatican. Jerusalem.

Why Jerusalem? Because this was the city that had rejected her Messiah. The city Jesus lamented over, saying:

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who have been sent to her!" (Matthew 23:37 NASB)

Revelation is a tale of two cities, the harlot and the bride, Babylon and the New Jerusalem. The harlot rides the beast, persecutes the saints, and sheds the blood of the prophets. Only one city fits that description according to Jesus: Jerusalem.

And just like historical Babylon fell by way of the Euphrates being dried up, John envisions the same fate for Jerusalem. Josephus tells us that reinforcements for Titus came from the Euphrates region. Two men, Sohaemus and Antiochus ruled territories along the eastern edges of the empire and aided Titus during the siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

That's the historical anchor for this prophecy. It's not random. It's not far off in some unknowable future. It happened.

God had once dried up waters to save His people, the Red Sea in Exodus 14, and the Jordan in Joshua 3. Now He uses that same image to bring judgment but this time, on the apostate city.

And while judgment came to Jerusalem, the faithful were spared. The church, the new covenant people, were preserved. That's the theme of Revelation. It's not a horror story. It's a victory scroll.

So when we read Revelation, let's read it as the first century church would have, as something unfolding in their generation. As something soon. As something they were living through. Because when we do that, it opens up the true message: Christ reigns. His kingdom has come. And though judgment fell on Jerusalem, salvation came to His people.

"Because these are days of punishment, so that all things which have been written will be fulfilled." (Luke 21:22 NASB)

All things written. Not some. Not partial. All.

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