

KINGDOM NOW & FUTURE

Adult Sunday
School
9-10 am
June 2 -23

1. End Times' Genesis: The Church's Birth
2. End Times' Tribulation: This Generation
3. End Times' Jubilation: The Millennium
4. End Times' Culmination: New Heaven and Earth

HERITAGE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

SERIES: KINGDOM NOW AND FUTURE

MESSAGE 2. END TIMES' TRIBULATION: THIS GENERATION

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Good morning dear brothers and sisters in Christ. Today we continue our series entitled *Kingdom Now and Future*. This is the second message regarding the future tribulation and the controversy associated with the verse stating that "this generation that will not pass away" until the millennial kingdom starts.

Let's pray: *"Dear heavenly Father, we praise you for you alone are God. You alone created all things and determined how the world will end. We thank you because you have revealed to us the truth on End Times for our edification and comfort. Would you graciously illumine us by your Spirit so that we would see the wondrous things of your Law? Have mercy on us O God according to your promises. May your truth unite us all, for we ask it in Jesus' name, amen"*.

The Kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

These words were uttered by our beloved Lord Jesus to His disciples in Matthew 13:31-32. Then, "He told them another parable. "The Kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened"" (Matthew 13:33). And in that context, the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" And He answered them one of the most marvelous promises in all of Scripture. Matthew 13:11 **"To you it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given"**. To Christians, to the elects, **"it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God"**, but unbelievers do not have this privilege.

Do you know much about the Kingdom of God? Could you describe in a few minutes what is the Kingdom of God? What it is like, what it entails, what we are supposed to do in it? I hope you can because according to Acts 1:3, Jesus spent His last 40 days on earth **"speaking about the Kingdom of God"** to His disciples. The words we would say to our family members and relatives before departing this earth would be probably very important to us, right? And in this situation Jesus spoke about End Times and His Kingdom, which means that this is fairly significant. In Matthew 6:33, we are even commanded to **"seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness"** and all our needs will be met by our Father in heaven. In Acts 8:12, we are told that Philip the evangelist had the same message than Christ for **"he preached good news about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ"**. In Acts 19:8, we discover that when Paul was in Ephesus, he **"entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the Kingdom of God."** Paul spent months teaching unbelievers about the Kingdom, begging them to embrace Christ and yet we, Christians, are largely clueless about what the Kingdom of God is. How can this be? It's time to get at it, brethren, and learn from the Master of our souls about His Kingdom. Let our lives show that we seek first to understand the Kingdom and then to serve in light of it, amen!

In our first message, we saw that the Kingdom of God means His rule. He rules over creation which is called the Universal Kingdom. He rules over salvation which is called the Spiritual or Redemptive Kingdom. Both of these Kingdom dimensions are always present on earth as God sovereignly rules all things and continually and graciously saves more elect sinners. The spiritual Kingdom exists now, and people enter into it by being born of the Spirit. This is the Kingdom dimension that Jesus said: **"is not of this world"** in John 18:36. Thirdly, God rules over the earth through human representatives or mediators in a specific geographical location. This is called the Mediatorial Kingdom. This Kingdom does not always exist on the earth and is spoken in future terms in the Bible. Christ will establish His millennial Kingdom at His second coming. This is the Kingdom dimension that Revelation 5:10 speaks about: **"You have made them to be a Kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth"**. This Kingdom dimension is realized upon the earth, it is not *of* this world, but *in* this world. The Kingdom of God has thus three dimensions: the universal, the spiritual or redemptive, and the mediatorial Kingdom dimensions.

The meaning of the two parables cited earlier refers to the Spiritual Kingdom of salvation during the Church age. This Kingdom is like a small grain of mustard seed or a leaven, which symbolize the Spirit's impact through the Gospel we individually preach to our neighbors. There is a global impact for our individual testimony to the lost. The grain becomes a tree. The leaven causes "all to be leavened". The whole world hears about our doctrine. The New Covenant Spiritual Kingdom of God started as a little nothing in Israel, just a few disciples, and is reaching the uttermost parts of the world today! Are you obediently serving the King in this mission? Or are you AWOL, absent without leave? You know that the Bible says that unbelievers are said to be physically alive and yet dead in their sins. They are alive without really being alive. Are you sadly just like them in a different way? It's time to wake up, you are on a mission. This is why Paul wrote to *Christians* in Eph. 5:14-17: **"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is".**

Last week, we secondly saw that Israel always refers to ethnic Jews in the Bible. Israel can mean National Israel (i.e. all Jews, elects and non-elects combined) or True Israel (only the elects). True Israel is also called the Remnant and the Israel of God. We saw that the Church is comprised of elects Jews and Gentiles. Hence True Israel is a subset of both National Israel and the Church.

Third, we saw that the Church is not the New Israel and did not exist in the OT because: (1) the Church is composed of all the nations whereas Israel is only one nation, (2) the Church was a mystery in the OT, (3) Jesus said "I will build my Church" hence it was still future in 28 AD, (4) The Church belongs to the New Covenant in Christ's blood, and (5) The Church was born at Pentecost when the disciples were baptized into the church by the Spirit. We saw that the speaking in tongues at Pentecost was infallibly explained by Peter who quoted Joel's prophecy in Acts 2:17: **"in the last days [...] I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh"**. Speaking in tongues in Acts 2 (i.e. human languages) was thus a sign of the birth of the multi-ethnic Church. The point of being in last days, that is we are in the End Times, was found in Acts 2:21: **"everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"** so trust and obey Jesus and you will be saved right here and right now. And if you know the Lord, pray and act to preach His Gospel to all around you. They are dying and you are Christ's Kingdom ambassador.

Today, in message two of our series, we will see what the Bible has to say about the Kingdom of God and the Tribulation. Paul taught various congregations that life in the Spiritual Kingdom of God in the Church age is anything but easy. In Acts 14:22, we learn that he was **"strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in**

the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God." The Greek word "tribulation" literally means *pressure* and metaphorically means oppression, affliction, tribulation, and distress. Paul knew about tribulations for he said this just after having barely escaped death by stoning at the hands of the Jews. This pressure is real. Jesus affirmed it and yet His supernatural comfort is with us. In John 16:33, He said: **"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world"**. The peace comes from the victory of Jesus and the promises given in the context, namely the outpouring of the Spirit on all Christians and the return of Christ. At that time, our sorrows will be turned into everlasting joy. Alleluia, Maranatha come to Lord Jesus!

These pressures are ongoing tribulations ever present between the two comings of the Lord Jesus, but there is a day coming when Matthew 24:21 says **"there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be"**. That's the Tribulation capital T if you will.

Now in the same context, Jesus made a comment that has generated a lot of controversy in recent years. This is found in Matthew 24:34, which reads, **"Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place."** There is a generation that will not die out before **"all these things take place."** Sadly, there are so many erroneous views from the verse. I will simply call to your attention a prominent one which is embraced by amillennialist and postmillennialist camps (see the first message for more details on these groups). They say that every time the Greek word *genea* (meaning generation) is used by Jesus, it must refer to the generation of the disciples who heard His message. This means that much of His sermon and much of the book of Revelation is seen as something that was fulfilled in the first century; specifically, with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The verse **"This generation will not pass away"** had sadly been a reason for which many premillennialist Christians—who believe that Christ will come back *before* the literal 1000-year reign of Revelation 20 begins— have abandoned the right view of future prophecy and believe that the generation of the disciples saw the fulfillment of much of Matthew 24 and that we are now in the millennium. Is that true?

I. LET'S FIND OUT BY READING CHAPTER OF MATTHEW 24,

and I will provide a few comments along the way.

The Background of the Sermon

24 ¹ Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. ² And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things?"

Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.” [Here Jesus predicted the destruction of the Jerusalem temple which occurred in 70 A.D.]

³As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will **these things happen**, and what *will be the sign of Your coming*, and of the **end of the age?**” [The disciples wanted to know the *timing* of these events but wrongly “supposed that the Kingdom of God was going to appear immediately” Luke 19:11. Jesus thus went on to explain that the Gospel must first be preached to all the nations during the Church age before His coming and the establishment of the Mediatorial Kingdom. The signs indicating Christ return were also about to be mentioned]

The Church Age (Not Yet the End)

⁴And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. ⁵For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many. ⁶You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for *those things* must take place, but *that is not yet the end*. ⁷For nation will rise against nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom, and in various places, there will be famines and earthquakes. ⁸But all these things are **merely the beginning** of birth pangs. ⁹“Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. ¹⁰At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. [It was not the end of the world yet, just the Church Age and its accompanying persecutions. Jesus’ prediction about persecutions, what He calls “birth pangs” proved right since it was estimated that as many as 70 million professing Christians have been martyred since Jesus said these words] ¹¹Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. ¹²Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. ¹³But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. ¹⁴This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, **and then the end will come**.

[Now, the parallel passage in Mark 13:9ff shows that this stage happened from the apostles’ day (and it is also an accurate picture of the whole Church age): “**But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them**. The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. **When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit**”].

Next, the Great Tribulation time (the Future End)

¹⁵“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION [i.e. the desecration of the Jewish temple by the Antichrist]: which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet [that is the future Tribulation (capital T) which coincides with the prophecy of the 70th week in Daniel 9:24-27], standing in the holy place (**let the reader understand**),¹⁶ then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. ¹⁷Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house.¹⁸ Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. ¹⁹But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰But pray that

your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. ²¹ **For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.** [Again we see that this time is unique and *unrepeatable* and thus *cannot have occurred in the past* otherwise how could we explain the End Times' passages about *future* cataclysms] ²² Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. ²³ Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There *He is*,' do not believe *him*. ²⁴ **For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders**, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ Behold, I have told you in advance. ²⁶ So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, *or*, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe *them*. ²⁷ **For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.** [We see that this time shortly precedes Christ's return and displays the signs of Jesus' second coming] ²⁸ **Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.**

Next, the Return of Jesus

²⁹ **"But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky** [pause right here. When is this happening? Verse 29 says **"immediately after the tribulation of those days"**. What days? Those that He just described in verses 15-28 when he said that there will be **"a great tribulation"** which has never happened in the human race. The coming of the Lord is thus preceded by a terrifying time of terror on earth], **and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.** [This is the **separation of the sheep and the goats described in Matthew 25:31-46**, that is when Christ will separate tribulation saints gathered by the angels from the unbelievers on earth would will all be killed. Now some people think we cannot know the End Times' teaching of the Bible but what Jesus said next proves otherwise]

Then there is the Parable of the Fig Tree

³² **"Now learn the parable from the fig tree [That's a command: learn these truths** through the analogy of the fig tree. Since Luke mentioned "all the trees" (Luke 21:29), so what is coming is not about the nation of Israel (a fig tree) but this is a general analogy taken from nature and the seasons]: **when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; ³³ so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door** [That's a simple analogy, just as leaves on fig trees which come in the spring and indicate that the summer near, in the same way, when you see the abomination of desolation, false signs and wonders by false prophets, the sun and the moon being darkened, stars falling from the sky etc, then you will know that we are in the last hours of humanity. We are to learn the signs of the seasons. **Now comes our verse of**

the day].³⁴ Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. [again that's one of the verses which amills and postmills use to say that we are in the millennium and that most of the prophetic material here and in Revelation was fulfilled in 70 AD] ³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

³⁶ “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. ³⁷ For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,³⁹ and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹ Two women *will be grinding at the mill*; one will be taken and one will be left.

And here is the take-home application: Be Ready for His Coming

⁴² “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. [The last verses illustrate the unexpected return of Jesus to judge with the analogy of the Thief in the Night].

II. NOW I WANT TO GIVE YOU 9 ARGUMENTS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT “this generation will not pass away until all these things take place” was not fulfilled in 70 AD and refers to the future time of the tribulation. As we do so, we will learn at the same time various truths about the End Times’ tribulation.

Amillennialists argue that Jesus always used the Greek word *genea*, meaning generation, to address His generation. Gary DeMar puts it this way in regard to Matthew 24:34, “Every time ‘this generation’ is used in the New Testament, it means, without exception, the generation to whom Jesus was speaking.” They then rightly quote several passages in which Jesus did address His generation. For instance:

Mark 8:12: “And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, **no sign will be given to this generation**”.

Matthew 11:16: “**But to what shall I compare this generation?** It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates”.

Luke 7:31: “**To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like?**”.

Luke 11:50: “so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, **may be charged against this generation**”.

Surely, Jesus did use the Greek word *genea* to speak to His first-century generation, but it is wrong to assume that the word *genea* always implies His generation because the

meaning of a biblical word must always be analyzed in its direct context. All the above contexts clearly show that Jesus spoke of His fellow Jews. However, when it comes to the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24-25, which is also reported in the parallel texts in Luke 21 and Mark 13, Jesus spoke of another generation, a future generation which the context shows to be witnessing the signs of Jesus' return. How do we know this? Here nine reasons to understand this generation as being a future generation of believers and not first-century Christians.

ARGUMENT 1. **MATTHEW APPEALED TO FUTURE READERS OF HIS GOSPEL**

Matthew records the words of Jesus who said, "**when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION: which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place** but then he added an editorial note: **(let the reader understand)**". In 30 AD, Jesus said that this generation will be the one that sees the signs, and some 20 to 30 years later when Matthew wrote the gospel that bears his name (in 50 to 60 AD), he made sure to comment for the future readers of his text: "**let the reader understand**". Matthew knew that Jesus' first audience was not the one who would see the signs. This generation was to see the signs and the return of Jesus: "**So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates**" (v. 33), which is why the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to add comments to warn the readers who will in fact see Christ's return. The *genea* of Matthew 24:34 is the one that will see all the signs that precede Christ's coming, such as the abomination of desolation, false signs and wonders by false prophets, the sun and the moon being darkened, stars falling from the sky, etc. Since a generation lasted about forty years in ancestral Hebrew thought (John T. Willis) and the future Tribulation will last only seven years, therefore the generation that will see these signs will not pass before Jesus returns.

ARGUMENT 2. **THE GREEK WORD GENEAE DOES NOT ALWAYS REFER TO THE GENERATION OF THE FIRST CENTURY**

You may ask: is geneae ever used to speak of a generation different from the original first-century audience? That's a fair question and the answer is, absolutely. Please turn in your Bible to Hebrews 3:10... In this verse, it is written, "**Therefore I was angry with this generation** (Greek *geneae*), and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they did not know My ways'". Did the author of the epistle to the Hebrews have in mind the generation of Jews he was written to when he mentioned "**this generation**"? No, not at all, no more than Jesus necessarily spoke of his contemporaries in Matthew 24:34. It's always about the generation mentioned in the context of a given passage. **In Hebrews 3:10, the author deals with the past generation** of Jews who perished in the desert. That's obvious from verses 8 and 9: "**Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, Where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years**" (Hebrews 3:8-9). **In Matthew 24:34, Jesus deals with the future generation** of

men who will see the signs of His coming: "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30).

But someone might say that the text speaks of "this generation", and that the word "this", *houtos* in the Greek, strongly suggests that Jesus spoke of the Jews before his eyes. That may sound plausible in English, but not in the Greek, as one commentator (Iver Larsen) put it:

"This word has no exact equivalent in English. The nearest equivalent is the word "this", but there are several differences in meaning between *houtos* and "this." One difference is that "this" in English is often cataphoric, referring to something coming later in the context, while ***houtos* is basically anaphoric, referring to something mentioned in the preceding context** [in our case that is the time of the end v. 15 when Christ returns...] Another difference is that ***houtos* might as well be translated "that" in most contexts** [that's the case in v. 34 where we could also read: "That generation will not pass away"], simply because the use of demonstratives as reference pointers vary from one language to another".

For instance, *houtos* is used in Matthew 25:46 to talk about those who will "go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" when Jesus comes and punishes unbelievers. In sum, there is no shortcut for the interpretation of *houtos genea*, it is not automatically the first-century generation of Jews, although that is frequent use of the expression. The meaning is contingent on the context, which, in this case is about a future prophecy about Christ' return and in Heb. 3:10 is about past event following the Exodus.

ARGUMENT 3. **ALL THE PROPHECIES OF MATTHEW 24 ARE NOT YET FULFILLED INCLUDING CHRIST'S RETURN.**

What is known as Preterism is a theological view which interprets end times' prophecies as events which have already happened in the first century AD (or the first few hundred years). The name preterism comes from the word preterit meaning past and is opposed to the view called futurism, which teaches that end Times prophecies are still to be fulfilled in the future. There are two kinds of preterism, *partial preterism* which asserts that many but not all of end times' prophecies have been fulfilled in the first century. This camp contains the amils and postmils who for the most part believe that we are in the millennium. The second kind of preterism is known as *full preterism* or hyper-preterism. Full preterists are heretics because they deny the future return of Jesus and say that we are in the New Heavens and the New Earth. With this in mind, think with me for a moment. If the preterist interpretation was true, then, **"this generation will not pass away until all these things take place"** (Matthew 24:34) would mean that all of the prophetic content in the context has already happened in

the first century, right? How could it not include "**all these things**"? That's the prerequisite for the generation to be the generation of the context.

However, the first-century generation did not see all these things taking place. John MacArthur comments: "*[This generation] cannot refer to the generation alive at the time of Christ, because "all these things" —the abomination of desolation (v.15), persecutions and judgments (v. 17-22), the false prophets (v. 23-26), the signs in the heavens (v. 27-29), the final return of Christ (v. 30), the gathering of the elect (v. 31)—did not happen during their lifetime*". Moreover, when Christ returns, the rapture and resurrection of the dead accompanied by the creation of the glorified and immortal body will take place (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Has this already happened? No. And what about all the tribes of the earth (Matthew 24:30), are they already mourned for rejecting Jesus? Certainly not. Moreover, the "**good news of the Kingdom**" of (v.14) has not been "**preached throughout the world, to serve as a witness to all nations [and] then will be the end**". It is therefore impossible for the generation of Matthew 24:34 to refer to the time of Christ. Amazingly, hyper-preterists are right to call themselves consistent preterists since they do not make "**all these things**" mean less than "**all these things**". However, they spiritualize Scripture (i.e. twist and allegorize its meaning) to make a preposterous case for our being in the New Earth where there is no more death, sin, or tears.

ARGUMENT 4. **PROPHETIC PERSPECTIVE IS INVOLVED IN MATTHEW 24.**

Preterists say that "**this generation**" must refer to the first-century audience otherwise Jesus' words would have been meaningless to them. They contend that unless the words of Scripture have direct application to the original audience, then one's interpretation is false.

Now, the problem with this view is that it does not work with prophetic passages because therein is found what is called prophetic perspective. Prophetic perspective is the fact that biblical passages often list prophecies in a rapid fire fashion even though their fulfillment can have significant time gaps. For instance, in Isaiah 9:6 we read of a two-part prophecy: "**For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders**". It's easily understood that many, many years are required between the birth of Jesus and His reign, and yet in this text, the time gap between the prophetic events is not mentioned. In Matthew 24, the destruction of Jerusalem did occur in the generation of the apostles (this is first parts of the chapter, before the end comes), and yet Christ has not returned yet (this is the second part of the chapter where "**this generation**" is mentioned, or when the end comes). Prophetic perspective is involved since there are time indicators such as the "**beginning of birth pangs**" in v. 8 and "**the end**" in vv.14ff during which "**all these things**" (v. 33) will be fulfilled. In this case, the time gap is thousands of years.

You see, when prophecies were given in the Bible, it often did not relate to the generation who first heard the words. In Genesis 15:13, Abram received the prophecy that his descendants would be “enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.” Or consider Deuteronomy 28:36-37 where Moses prophesied curses that would come upon Israelites centuries after the entrance into the promised land: “The Lord will bring you and your king, whom you set over you, to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone. You shall become a horror, a proverb, and a taunt among all the people where the Lord drives you.” Note that in Deuteronomy 28, Moses said “The Lord will bring **you** and **your** king, whom **you** set over **you**, to a nation which neither **you** nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone” etc, although none of the original audience actually experienced these judgments. This is also why the “**you**” in Matthew 24, such as in v. 33 “**you see all these things**” does not refer to the original audience. These prophecies were meaningful but not directly applicable to the first audience, just as in Matthew 24 which calls for readiness regarding Christ’s return and yet most Christians will not be of that final generation. This is why the OT “prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. [And] **It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you**” (1 Peter 1:11-12). Prophetic perspective thus explains the multiple components and timings of the prophecy in Mat 24.

ARGUMENT 5. **THIS GENERATION IS ILLUSTRATED BY THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE WHICH SPEAKS OF JESUS’ RETURN**

In Mat. 24:32-33, Jesus linked His being “right at the door” to “this generation” and illustrated it with the parable of the fig tree (or trees) that we discussed earlier. This context again shows that “this generation” is the generation that will see the return of Jesus indicated by various miraculous signs. Interpreting this parable and “this generation” as the generation of those who see the signs of the Tribulation is therefore only consistent with premillennialism.

ARGUMENT 6. **THIS GENERATION IS ILLUSTRATED BY THE GENERATION OF NOAH**

Matthew 24:36-37 teaches us that the generation of Matthew 24:34 has similarities with Noah's generation. So, let's see if this illustration best fits the preterist or the futurist view. What happened in Noah's generation? **Was it a local disaster upon rebellious men like in 70 A.D. with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, or was it a global one like when Jesus will come back?** Well, Scripture clearly says it was a **global flood** which destroyed all the enemies of God. Therefore, this second illustration of global judgment does not harmonize with the preterist interpretation which sees the fulfillment of Mat 24 in

70 AD and clearly corresponds to the futuristic view of premillennialism which involved a **global tribulation** at the end of the world.

ARGUMENT 7. **THIS GENERATION COULD NOT BE JESUS' AUDIENCE BECAUSE JESUS SAID THAT HE DID NOT KNOW THE TIME OF HIS RETURN**

If preterism was true then Jesus would have sinned by speaking out of ignorance (which is false) since in Matthew 24:36, Jesus affirmed: **"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."** Jesus did not know the time of His return which is decided by the Father. Why? Because, in His humanity, Christ was not omniscient. But if Jesus knew that His return would be so close to the apostles' lifetime when He explained, "this generation will see my return", then that would seem to contradict His statement in v. 36.

ARGUMENT 8. **PARALLEL PASSAGE IN ZECHARIAH 12 WAS NOT FULFILLED IN 70 A.D.**

The destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem and the city that Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24:1-2 and Luke 21:20-24 was unquestionably accomplished in 70 A.D., and this proves the truth of the message of Christ and his divinity (Isaiah 46: 9-10). Let us now consider the description of Zechariah 12, which deals with the attack on Jerusalem by "all nations". Please turn to Zechariah 12:3... It reads: **"It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it."** A parallel text is found in Luke 21:20 and reads, **"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near"**. Preterists say that this only refers to 70 A.D. when the Roman army surrounded Jerusalem. They would say that people from all nations were part of this army and that this prophecy was fulfilled at that time. Is that true? While premils often see the Jerusalem destruction of 70 A.D. as a preview of the future tribulation, there is one single argument which shows that the passages of Zechariah, Matthew, and Luke were not fulfilled in 70 A.D.

Consider this question: Who lost the battle in 70 A.D.? The Jews or the Romans? Yes, you're right, the Jews. The renown first-century Romano-Jewish historian by the name of Josephus claims that 1.1 million people were killed during the siege, of which a majority were Jewish. Jerusalem was sacked and the temple was destroyed and burned.

However, who wins the battle in the prophecy of Zechariah 12-14? Israel or the Nations? Let's find out, please turn to **Zechariah 14:1**... **"1 Behold, a day is coming for the Lord when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. 2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle** (it says all the nations but in 70 A.D. not all the nations were gathered against Jerusalem), **and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from**

the city. 3 **Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle** (So what's the answer? Israel will win because the Lord will personally fight against the nations). 4 **In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives** (fast forward end of verse 5) **Then the Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!** 6 **In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle.** 7 **For it will be a unique day which is known to the Lord,** neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light. 8 **And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem,** half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. 9 **And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one**". These last words describe the topic of the next message: the Glorious Millennium of Jesus with His saints. As a result, the biblical prophecies of the final attack on Jerusalem (Ez. 38:1-6,14-16, Dan. 11:40-44, Zech. 12:1-3, Rev. 9:13-16, 14:20, 16: 12-16) were not fulfilled in 70 A.D. because Israel will win this battle through God's help. This will be fulfilled in the future as premillennialism teaches.

But you might ask what is the purpose of it all? What is the purpose of the tribulation?

One of the purposes of the Tribulation is to lead Israel to repentance and they will as we are about to see. This is why the Tribulation and Israel are linked together by Jeremiah 30 verse 3 which calls it the time of "**Jacob's trouble**". Israel's trouble will be with all the nations so they will have no one but God to turn to for deliverance. You see, in Isaiah 45:4 God says, "**Israel mine elect**". God has sovereignly called and chosen Israel and Romans 11:29 tells us that the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable which is why there will be a future restoration of National Israel as we are about to see. Another purpose of the Tribulation is to judge the world and prepare the earth for the millennium. Just like the flood, the tribulation is the time when God ravages the earth and will kill all who oppose Him, this time not with a global flood of water but with all kinds of natural disasters and other divine catastrophes that will flood the earth. And when God will have justly ravaged the earth through the Great Tribulation, as occurred after the flood God will revitalize and rejuvenate His earth for the 1000-year reign of Jesus!

Let's recap the arguments that we have seen so far:

1. This Generation in Matthew 24:34 refers to the future generation of the tribulation because nearly 30 years later Matthew appealed the **readers to understand** which show that Jesus's words were meant to transcend the original audience.
2. We saw that the meaning Greek **word generation (genea) is determined by the context**. In Hebrews 3:10, it referred to a **past generation** of Jews in the wilderness. In Matthew 24:34, it refers to the **future generation** of people who will see the signs of Jesus' return.

3. We considered that **“this generation” will come when “all these things are fulfilled”** which include world-evangelism, supernatural signs in the heavens, and Christ’s return. Hence, it is a future generation.
4. We saw the principle of **prophetic perspective** which explains that the **“you” in Matthew 24 does not have to refer to the original audience** in every case, just as the audience of the **“you”** in Deuteronomy 28 did not see the fulfillment of the curses therein.
5. We saw that Jesus **illustrated His return by the parable of the fig tree** or trees and **that the generation of the context is the one that has to learn from the fig tree** to know the season of Christ’s return.
6. We learned that Jesus **compared this generation to the one of Noah’s day and since a global disaster occurs in these days, the local battle of Jerusalem in 70 AD does not fit the comparison** and the generation of Matthew 24:34 must be the one that sees the return of Jesus Christ since it will witness a **global Tribulation**.
7. We saw that **this generation could not be Jesus’ audience because Christ said that He did not know the time of His return**.

And 8. We saw that **in 70 AD, Jerusalem was destroyed and lost the battle whereas the end times prophecy of Luke 21 and Zechariah says the Lord will fight for Israel, win, and destroy all his enemies**.

Now let’s see one final argument and truths about Israel and the Tribulation:

ARGUMENT 9. LUKE DESCRIBES “THIS GENERATION” AS THE TIME OF DIVINE VENGEANCE WHEN THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES IS FULFILLED WHICH IS CLEARLY FUTURE

Please turn to Luke 21, starting in verse 20... “20 “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. 21 Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; 22 **because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled**. 23 Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; **for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people**; 24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and **Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled**. 25 “There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 **Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory**. 28 But when these

things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Now remember that in this context we also read in Luke 21:32, **“Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place”**, so the two passages talk about the same generation.

Hence, when we find the expression day or **“days of vengeance”** (v. 22) which is a common OT expression for the final wrath of God (e.g. Isaiah 63:4) when Christ will come back, we know that this is a future generation. Interestingly, when Jesus opened the book of Isaiah in Luke 4, **“He opened the book and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”** That was a quote from Isaiah 61:2 and Jesus purposefully stopped at **“the favorable year of the Lord”**, because the very next words in Isaiah 61:2 said: **“And the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn in Zion (i.e. Israel) [...] a double portion in their land [and] everlasting joy.”** Why did Jesus stop at the favorable year of the Lord, without speaking of any vengeance? Because Jesus’ first coming was that of mercy and grace through the Gospel of salvation, but Jesus’ second coming will be of judgment and vengeance through for eternal damnation against all His enemies. Jesus’ day of vengeance did not come in the first century and is still future. This places **“this generation”** (Luke 21:32) in the future.

Besides, we just read that this generation will exist when **“the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled”** (Luke 21:24). And when will that be? When National Israel is converted. Please open your Bible to Romans 11:25... **“For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved”**. Did you see that word that makes all the difference in the world in this text? **“Until”**, meaning Israel as a nation, what Paul the Hebrew calls in chapter 9 verse 4 **“my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites”**, National Israel will become Christian. But When? When **“the fullness of the Gentiles has come in”** (v. 26). When **“the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled”** (Luke 21:24). What does it mean? This is simple, we are called to make disciples of all of the nations and when the last Gentile elect gets saved on earth through world-evangelism, the this will be the end of the times of the gentiles and Jesus will come back. That generation brethren will see the second coming of vengeance of Jesus.

To strengthen your understanding of the future restoration of National Israel I'd like to show you one more passage. Remember what we discussed last week. We saw that the spiritual Kingdom was brought to Israel with the New Covenant but that only a handful of Jews obeyed the Gospel. Scripture calls them **“True Israel”**, **“the Israel of God”**, and **“True Israelites”**. But as a whole, the Nation of Israel has been **temporarily**, mark this word,

temporarily set aside by God and the Church currently has the spiritual Kingdom. We learn this from the Parable of the Landowner in Matthew 21. Please turn to Matthew 21:33...

"33 "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a winepress in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. 34 When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. 35 The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third (now that's a picture of National Israel which killed the prophets that God sent to them). 36 Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. 37 But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' (now God sent His Son to Israel). 38 But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' 39 They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. (The Jews killed the Son of God, their Messiah) 40 Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?" 41 They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons." 42 Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, This became the chief corner stone; This came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? 43 **Therefore I say to you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you (i.e. Israel) and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.** (i.e. the Church) 44 And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust." 45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. (the killers in the parables are the rebellious Jews of Israel) 46 When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people, because they considered Him to be a prophet".

Without a doubt Matthew 21:43 affirms that National Israel has been set aside by God and the Church now has the Kingdom. Note, however, that Scripture never says that the Church has replaced Israel. No, the biblical terminology goes like this: "**a partial hardening has happened to Israel until**" (Rom 11:25). You see, Scripture does not say that a full and complete and irreversible hardening has happened to Israel so that God has forsaken His elect. It's only a **partial hardening until** God sovereignly softens their hearts and grafts them back into their own Olive tree (Romans 11). As a result, Matthew 21:43 only teaches a temporary setting aside of Israel. Romans 11:25 tells us that this will be so "**until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved**". Jesus put it this way in tears in Matthew 23:37: "37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! 39 **For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'**". Israel will not see Jesus **until** they believe in Him as their Messiah; "**until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled**" (Mat. 24:24).

Regarding the restoration of National Israel, Professor of Church history Nathan

Busenitz said: *"One of the things that surprises a lot of people is the fact that there are many throughout Church history, Christian leaders, theologians, biblical commentators, who affirmed that same reality from Romans 11:26, that there will be a mass conversion of ethnic Jews, the Jewish people, at the end of the Church age. We find this taught in the church fathers, men like Justin Martyr, Tertullian, even Agustin affirmed this. We find it taught in the writings of some of the reformers, John Calvin for instance in his commentary on Romans 11:26. Theodore Basem [...] and others and then the Puritan era. Many of the Puritans believed this, men like William Perkins and John Gill, Johnathan Edwards, and the men who put together the Geneva study Bible [...] It's encouraging for us to recognize that as men through Church history read Romans 11:26 they often concluded what we conclude namely that there will be a future salvation for ethnic Israel, just as God has promised".*

When will this restoration take? When will the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled?

According to a premil understanding of Daniel 9:27 we can understand that the Antichrist will "will make a covenant of peace with Israel during the seven-year tribulation, but in the middle of the seven years, he will attack them and desecrate the Temple then rebuilt (the desolation we read about earlier). That's when Zechariah 13:1 proclaims that **"a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity."** That's when the Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones of Ezekiel 37 will become sight and reality. When the Word of the Gospel will speak to the dry bones which are the whole house of Israel and they will live for Christ. Verse 12ff: **"12 Thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. 13 Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. 14 I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken and done it," declares the Lord."** This is when Isaiah 53 will be fully fulfilled, for Isaiah 53 speaks in the past. The converted Nation of Israel will say in the future:

"4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him." Do you believe that? Do you believe that Jesus died for sins, in fact, for your sins if you believe? Do you understand that before the holy and eternal God of the universe, Creator of heaven and earth, do you understand that you are a horrible sinner before His absolute purity? We are called children of wrath and sons of disobedience in Scripture. Do you understand that you deserved to eternally bear in hell, griefs, sorrows,

that you deserved to be stricken, smitten of God, afflicted, pierced in your soul forever with guilt? Do you confess before God, "have mercy on me a hopeless sinner"? If so, Romans 10:9 gives you a promise: **"if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.** Truly repent of your cherished sins and trust in Christ's work on the cross alone for divine forgiveness, and you will be saved. To conclude, let me quote what the tribulation saints will say after they die in this future generation that will not pass away till Christ comes back. Revelation 6:10: **"they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"**. Our brothers from SovereignGraceMusic put these words in music in the song called "How Long, O Lord?", let's sing it with the desire the see Jesus come back: "How Long, O Lord before you come back?".

YouTube, "How Long, O Lord • Prayers of the Saints Live":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mFRMcolr6s>

How Long, O Lord

SovereignGraceMusic

Album: Prayers of the Saints Live. Songwriter: Doug Plank

VERSE 1

Every valley will be lifted high
And the weak will be the strong
When You come like lightning in the sky
How long, O Lord, how long?

VERSE 2

Kings on earth will scatter when they hear
Thundering sounds of angel songs
Hearts will tremble, filled with holy fear
How long, O Lord, how long?

CHORUS

All our hopes are fixed on You
That Your promises are true
And one day You will return
All our treasures here will fade
So, we long to see Your face
Until then our hearts will burn
How long, O Lord?

VERSE 3

You will conquer every evil thing
Every sorrow, pain, and wrong
They will cease with Your return, our King
How long, O Lord, how long?

CHORUS

BRIDGE

How long, O Lord, how long? (Men) *How long, O Lord, how long?* (Women)

CHORUS