

# Applying the Touchstone and Lodestar of *Scripture* To The Morassy Foundation and Principles of *Preterism*

## Chapter 7

### Matthew 24:34

**Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.**

### Matthew 24:34

**"Verily I say to you, This generation will not have passed away until all these things shall have taken place." (Matt. 24:34; see also Mark 13:30 and Luke 21:32)**

Preterists hold that "this generation" refers to our Lord's *contemporaries*, and that He was here promising that they would not all pass away (i.e., that they would not pass away as a whole) till all these things of Matt. 24 of the Olivet Discourse has been fulfilled. *Therefore* (they say), all these things of Matt. 24 of the Olivet Discourse, including the coming of the Son of Man to establish His kingdom, *must have been* fulfilled in the lifetime His contemporaries (as a whole)—specifically in, or immediately after, the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, in 70AD.

**And bear in mind, "partial" Preterists hold to a *non-literal, non-personal, non-physical, providential Second Coming of Christ in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD*; whereas "full" Preterists claim to hold to a literal (!), personal, physical Second Coming of Christ in, or immediately after, the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. **But, in either brand of Preterism, the kingdom inaugurated at His 70AD Second Coming is *mysticalized/spiritualized*.** [Of course, the "partial" Preterist notion is also contradicted entirely, e.g., by Matt. 24:29-31. The Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD cannot *be* the providential Second Coming; nor can it be the *result* of the providential Second Coming. For the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory is declared by Scripture to take place *after—immediately after—*"the tribulation of those days," which, in the spiritual alchemy of Preterism, *is the very destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD*. To thus teach that the destruction of Jerusalem takes place after the destruction of Jerusalem is utter nonsense!]**

And it has already been demonstrated at some length that the Preterist *approach or methodology* is a *selective, isolated, pseudo-literal* one (2 Pet. 1:20), which *reads into* their select texts *that which cannot be found there or anywhere else* in God's Word, and which *mysticalizes* the kingdom, and *overthrows* the *genuinely* plain, normal, literal sense of *all other prophetic scriptures*—including, e.g., the myriad of OT prophecies, and the very Olivet Discourse itself and the book of Revelation as a whole—bearing on the future of Israel, the promised kingdom, the coming of Christ, etc., etc. As such, the Preterist take on Matt. 24:34, e.g., is completely illegitimate and cannot possibly be true.

Now Preterists act as if, and *insist* that, "this generation" can have no *literal* (!) meaning other than the *restricted temporal or chronological* sense of the Lord's *own* contemporaries (*those living at the time*). They then proceed with their *mysticalizing* methodology to conform the scope of all prophetic truth, including the very Olivet Discourse itself, to that one *selective, isolated, pseudo-literal* notion.

The fact of the matter is, there are other scripturally-established, *literal* usages of “generation” or “this generation”; and as such, the one word or phrase, “this generation,” *does not determine the timing* of the fulfillment of the Olivet Discourse; it’s exactly the other way around!: *the timing* of the fulfillment of the Olivet Discourse (the context) *determines* the meaning or reference of the one word or phrase, “this generation” (*or, at least, what it cannot mean*). The former methodology is nothing but the *selective, isolated, pseudo-literal* approach (2 Pet. 1:20) of Preterism.

Another point to note, along the same line, is this: Preterists *mysticalize* Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week/the Tribulation Period/Matt. 24 of the Olivet Discourse *as referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD*, based on their *selective, isolated, pseudo-literal eisegesis* of Matt. 24:34 (10:23, 16:28 and 26:64), which they imagine requires the Lord to have returned *specifically* in 70AD (which has been shown, and will further be shown, to be absolutely false and unsupported). Further, this is a blatant case of **circular reasoning**. For Preterists *mysticalize* Matt. 24 of the Olivet Discourse *based on* their view of Matt. 24:34 (along with 10:23, 16:28 and 26:64); but they *justify* their 70AD view of Matt. 24:34 (10:23, 16:28 and 26:64) *based on* their *mysticalizing* of Matt. 24 of the Olivet Discourse!

"This generation"—there are, of course, only two options in understanding this text: a false one (of which there could be many) and the true one.

(A) False Option: The Preterist view has been shown, and will further be shown, to represent a false option, which entails an *eisegetical* interpretation in *isolation* from all other scripture revelation on the subject (including the Olivet Discourse itself), and particularly as to the nature of the kingdom (i.e., *each and every single* OT covenant, prophecy, promise to His earthly people Israel concerning a literal earthly kingdom is *mysticalized* or *alchemized* into a mere “spiritual” kingdom). The Preterist view, therefore, in no way follows a genuinely literal interpretation. It is an *eisegetical, isolated*, and thus a gravely erroneous and *pseudo-literal* interpretation.

(B) The True Option: "Generation" is used quite a number of times in scripture for *a class marked by a given moral character; a continuing moral class of persons*. And in Matt. 24:34 it indeed literally refers to an ongoing wicked class of persons; i.e., the Christ-rejecting, unbelieving, stubborn, rebellious wicked class in Israel, which would continue on, not pass away, till all is fulfilled in the future Tribulation Period/70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel—whereupon that wicked “generation” of Jews will be displaced in judgment by another *kind* of “generation” of Jews, the “generation to come” spoken of in the Psalms, a new moral class of *all-believing, all-righteous, all-saved* Jews, the godly Jewish remnant that will be brought under their New Covenant and compose the nation of Israel, the new and true spiritual Israel with the law written in their hearts, in the Millennial Kingdom. (See, e.g., Isa. 60:21; 66:8-9; Jer. 31:31-40; Rom. 11:26-27.) This is in perfect accord with all other scripture revelation on the subject, including the nature of the kingdom. It is in perfect harmony with all other scripture (2 Pet. 1:20), including the immediate context, and thus the correct and genuine literal interpretation. [Take note: this understanding of Matt. 24:34 also *implicitly conveys the truth of that which another literal meaning and (mistaken) interpretation* of “this generation” seeks, namely, that the *Jewish race as such* would be preserved unto the Second Coming of Christ.]

Before expounding on the true interpretation of Matt. 24:34, further proof of the speciousness and hollowness of the Preterist theory will be set forth.

As was indicated in the discussion of Matt. 16:28, the destruction of Jerusalem, *according to Dan. 9:26*, takes place **after** the end of the 69<sup>th</sup> week of years (9:26, after the *Messiah-Prince* is cut off in death) and **before** the start of the 70<sup>th</sup> week (Dan. 9:27)—**not during** the 70<sup>th</sup> week. *Therefore, the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem could not have been the fulfillment of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. The 70<sup>th</sup> week must be fulfilled sometime subsequent to the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem.*

Further, it is likewise true that Matt. 24 of the Olivet Discourse could not have been fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. For our Lord, in Matt. 24:15, refers to the *70<sup>th</sup> week* of Dan. 9:27, saying: “When therefore ye shall see the abomination of desolation, which is spoken of through Daniel the prophet [Dan. 9:27 & 12:11], standing in what is a holy place [in the middle of the 70<sup>th</sup> week] . . .” That is, the events of Matt. 24 *coincide with* the fulfillment of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. **The Lord Jesus thus provides indisputable “timing” for the fulfillment of Matt. 24 of the Olivet Discourse**—in that it is fulfilled whenever the 70<sup>th</sup> Week is fulfilled. And as Dan. 9:26 explains that the destruction of Jerusalem takes place *after* the end of the 69<sup>th</sup> week (9:26, after the *Messiah-Prince* is cut off in death) and *before* the start of the 70<sup>th</sup> week (Dan. 9:27), *then Matt. 24 could not have been fulfilled in the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem, but must be fulfilled sometime subsequent to 70AD.*

Our Lord makes clear that Matt. 24 of the Olivet Discourse and Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week are indissolubly linked, and thus must be fulfilled sometime subsequent to 70AD. Of course, according to literal interpretation with its recognition of dispensational truth, the fulfillment of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week is still future, and will not be fulfilled till after the imminent

rapture of the heavenly people of God. *But for now it is sufficient to show, based on Dan. 9:26-27 and Matt. 24:15, that Matt. 24 of the Olivet Discourse and Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week must be fulfilled sometime after the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem.*

It is Matt. 24:15 (with its reference to Dan. 9:27) which, therefore, provides *one* of the true keys in determining the *timing* of the fulfillment of Matt. 24 of the Olivet Discourse—*not* Matt. 24:34. *As such, even the selective, isolated, pseudo-literal Preterist view of Matt. 24:34 must be fulfilled sometime subsequent to 70AD . . . and after the accomplishment of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, whenever that might be.*

This leads to the next point . . .

Assuming for the sake of argument that the absurd Preterist view of “this generation” in Matt. 24:34 is correct—insofar as, His “contemporaries” would not all die or pass away till “all these things” of Matt. 24:4-32 have been fulfilled and the coming of the Son of Man occurs—***it still in no way entails Preterism; i.e., the coming of the Son of Man and establishment of His kingdom in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD.*** For Matt. 24:34 says *not one word* as to ***when*** “all these things shall take place”; though it has just been shown that it would ***have to be sometime subsequent to 70AD . . . and after the accomplishment of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, whenever that might be.*** Preterism/70ADism” is thus absolutely ruled out.

Further, there is absolutely *no promise* of the Lord in Matt. 24:34, or *anywhere else* for that matter, that any of His “contemporaries” would be *kept from passing away only “until 70AD.”* Nor is there one word in Matt. 24:34, or anywhere else, which declares that “all these things” of Matt. 24:4-32, with the coming of the Son of Man to establish His kingdom, would *“take place in 70AD”*. (All such preterizing notions have been *assumed and read into* the text *without any scriptural basis whatsoever.*)

Rather (still assuming for the sake of argument the basic correctness of the Preterist view), the Lord’s declaration in Matt. 24:34 simply requires that some of His “contemporaries” not die or pass away *till* “all these things” of Matt. 24:4-32 “shall have taken place”. But He gives not the slightest suggestion as to *when* that would be (certainly not 70AD).

As such, this yet leaves *one* possibility . . . actually the *only tenable* position (though there can be a slight variation of a detail or two within the scenario of this only tenable position) . . . that Preterists may, and *must*, adopt *under* their absurd, isolated, pseudo-literal view of Matt. 24:34 (i.e., insofar as, His “contemporaries” would not all die or pass away *till* “all these things” of Matt. 24:4-32 *have been fulfilled and the second coming of the Son of Man occurs*):

**That is, the Lord's declaration entails that He would, and has, miraculously kept some of His contemporaries alive for the past 2,000 years and will continue to do so until “all these things” of Matt. 24:4-32 have been fulfilled and the coming of the Son of Man occurs (these contemporaries include the very same Jewish disciples to whom the promise of Matt. 16:28 pertained).** Where are they being kept alive? The text does not say, but they are presumably in Paradise/the third heaven. Thus, the Lord (in making good on His word that His contemporaries would not all pass away till “all these things” of Matt. 24:4-32 have been fulfilled and the coming of the Son of Man occurs) had these Jewish disciples taken up to heaven at some point (perhaps prior to, or upon, His ascension), and has been miraculously keeping them alive as such for the past 2,000 years—*until He returns with them* to establish His literal kingdom on earth upon the fulfillment of “all these things” in Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week (or perhaps *they return shortly before* the coming of the Son of Man—i.e., they return sometime *during the future Tribulation Period/70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel*; see the discussion of Matt. 10:23). (And when “all these things” of Matt. 24:4-32 have been fulfilled and the coming of the Son of Man occurs, these Jewish disciples would then be allowed to finally “pass away,” so as to then be immediately resurrected to enter the earthly kingdom in their glorified bodies.)

This position is the *only tenable* one that Preterists may, and *must*, adopt *under* their absurd, isolated, pseudo-literal view of Matt. 24:34. But such is a self-defeating position! For Preterism/70ADism is thus absolutely ruled out by the very Preterist view of Matt. 24:34!

Therefore, either this position represents the true fulfillment of Matt. 24:34—in which case Preterism/70ADism disproves itself . . . collapses of its own weight . . . perishes in the ash heap; or the true position is that which recognizes “this generation” as a *“class marked by a given moral character; a continuing moral class of persons”* (as set forth below)—in which case, again, Preterism/70ADism is sent packing to return to *never never land*. Either way, *Futurism* is the end result!

Given the Preterist mysticalizing methodology in approaching the scriptures, it is *impossible* for that system to conclusively *disprove*, *either logically or biblically*, the self-defeating position outlined above. It would be interesting and instructive to behold the *manner* of their attempt!

There is yet further confirmation, *found in Luke 21*, of a *post-70AD* fulfillment of all of Matt. 24 of the Olivet Discourse and Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week: i.e., Luke 21:12-24, which provides *another true key* in determining the *timing* of their fulfillment.

In Luke 21:12-24 of the Olivet Discourse our Lord clearly speaks prophetically of the events leading up to and including the Roman siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. (Luke's Gospel is actually the *only* Synoptic Gospel to speak of these events *within* the Olivet Discourse. Matt. 24:2 and Mark 13:2 are not part of the Olivet Discourse *per se*.) However, it is equally clear that (in addition to, and in accordance with, the conclusive scriptural evidence presented above), the Olivet Discourse in Luke *also* necessarily encompasses events which find their fulfillment *sometime subsequent to 70AD* (as is the case with the Olivet Discourse in Matthew and Mark, though they speak *exclusively* of such events)—specifically, the future Tribulation Period/70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, and, upon its completion, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ to establish His literal earthly kingdom on this earth.

This is so, and unquestionably so, for the very simple reason of the *key words*—*another set of key words*—from the Lord Jesus at the beginning of Luke 21:12; i.e., “**But before all these things . . .**” That is, “**before** all these things” **of Luke 21:8-11, which correspond to the events of Matt. 24:4-8, etc.** **Before** (*an indefinite amount of time before*) all these things of the Tribulation Period/70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel are fulfilled (Luke 21:8-11 and Matt. 24:4-8, etc.), the events of Luke 21:12-24 would transpire—i.e., the events leading up to and including the Roman siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD.

**Luke 24:8-11:** “And they asked him saying, Teacher, when then shall these things be; and what is the sign when these things are going to take place? And he said, See that ye be not led astray, for many shall come in my name, saying, I am he, and the time is drawn nigh: go ye not therefore after them. And when ye shall hear of wars and tumults, be not terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end is not immediately. Then he said to them, Nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there shall be both great earthquakes in different places, and famines and pestilences; and there shall be fearful sights and great sign from heaven.”

**Luke 24:12-24:** “**But before all these things [of 24:8-11]** they shall lay their hands upon you and persecute you, delivering you up to synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors on account of my name; but it shall turn out to you for a testimony. Settle therefore in your hearts not to meditate beforehand your defence, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your opposers shall not be able to reply to or resist. But ye will be delivered up even by parents and brethren and relations and friends, and they shall put to death some from among you, and ye will be hated of all for my name's sake. And a hair of your head shall in no wise perish. By your patient endurance gain your souls. But when ye see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then know that its desolation is drawn nigh. Then let those who are in Judæa flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of it depart out, and those who are in the country not enter into it; for these are days of avenging, that all the things that are written may be accomplished. But woe to them that are with child and to them who give suck in those days, for there shall be great distress upon the land and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the nations until the times of the nations be fulfilled.”

**Luke 21:25-28:** “And there shall be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity at the roar of the sea and rolling waves, men ready to die through fear and expectation of what is coming on the habitable earth, for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws nigh.”

[An important point to observe, however, is that verse 24b of Luke 21 *runs on* into, and reaches its consummation within, the Tribulation Period/70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, wherein the “times of the Gentiles are fulfilled,” and “then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory,” verse 27. That is, Luke 21:12-24 **is essentially parenthetical to 21:8-11 and 21:25-36. Before all these things . . . !** And further notice that, while Matt. 24:4-8 and Luke 21:8-11 *correspond one to the other*, Matt. 24:9 and Luke 21:12 *do not*. Rather, Matt. 24:9ff *continues on in continuity with* the Tribulation/70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel spoken of in Matt. 24:4-8 (“**Then . . .**” or “**At that time . . .**,” verse 9), while Luke 21:12-24 *breaks the continuity with* the Tribulation/70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel spoken of in Luke 21:8-11, and *backs up* an indefinite period of time (“**But before all these things . . .**”), until it is resumed again in 21:25ff.]

As such, Matt. 24 (and Mark 13) of the Olivet Discourse and Luke 21:8-11, 25-36 of the Olivet Discourse **must** have a *post*-Roman destruction of Jerusalem/*post*-70AD fulfillment.

Luke 21:12 (“before all these things”), therefore, provides *another* true key in determining *the timing* of the fulfillment of Matt. 24 (and Mark 13) and Luke 21:8-11, 25-36 of the Olivet Discourse.

“To this end the third Gospel contributes invaluable help, not certainly by swamping the other two [Matthew and Mark on the Olivet Discourse], but by the fresh wisdom of God communicated by Luke, making us understand each so much the better because we have all, and thus furnishing a more comprehensive perception and enjoyment of the entire truth.”—William Kelly (*Elements of Prophecy*)

Now . . .

"If 'this generation' in Matthew 24:34 did and does not refer to a stipulated period of time, to what does it refer? Jesus' use of the expression earlier in the same day as his Olivet Discourse is important in answering that question. Matthew records it as part of Jesus' seventh woe against the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:36: 'All these things will come upon this generation of' (NASB). A careful tracing of Jesus' words in Matthew 23:29-39, observing the interchangeability of 'this generation' with the second-person-plural pronouns will show that **'this generation' is a qualitative expression without chronological or temporal connotations. It refers to a kind of people Jesus encountered at his first advent and also to the same kind of people who rebelled against God's leadership throughout the Old Testament. It refers to the kind of people who will not see Jesus again and who will continue to predominate in their rejection in the future until the nation Israel repents and says, 'Blessed is [the one] who comes in the name of the Lord' (Matt. 21:9; 23:39). In other words, 'this generation' set no time deadlines by which Jesus must return.**"—Robert L. Thomas ("The Place of Imminence in Recent Eschatological Systems," p. 204, in *Looking into the Future: Evangelical Studies in Eschatology*, Edited by David W. Baker. Baker Academic, 2001) [Emphasis mine. Bracketed comments are those of the author.]

“ ‘Generation’ is often used in Scripture for a class marked by a given moral character.” “The true force is, ‘this (Christ-rejecting, unbelieving) generation of Israel,’ not the mere existing generation, but such as bore the same moral fruits as those who then refused the Messiah.”—William Kelly (*The Christian Annotator*, 1856)

“The meaning of ‘this generation’ [refers to] . . . the race of unbelieving Jews from Moses’ day until the appearing of the Lord in glory. Matt. 23:34-39 shows the character of ‘this generation’; and Deut. 32:5, 20 describes them. It is not the persons of some time-slot when the Lord spoke these words.

“And that unbelieving class of Jews will come to its end; for here again we have **until**. They will be there *until* Christ appears in glory and executes judgment on them.”—R.A. Huebner (*Elements of Dispensational Truth*, Volume 2, p. 269. Present Truth Publishers, 1998)

**“And ye, fill ye up the measure of your fathers. Serpents, offspring of vipers . . . so that all righteous blood shed upon the earth should come upon you, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, **All these things shall come upon this generation. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those that are sent unto her**, how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, **Ye shall in no wise see me henceforth until ye say, Blessed be he that comes in the name of the Lord.**” (Matt. 23:32-39)**

Picking up on the above author’s statement in regard to Matt. 23:29-39, which was cited as an unmistakable example of the *qualitative, moral, non-temporal/non-chronological* usage of “this generation” in Scripture, note the pronouncement made by our Lord as to “this generation” (23:36) in the preceding verse: “so that all righteous blood shed upon the earth should come upon **you, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew** between the temple and the altar” (23:35b). **Was it the Lord’s own Jewish contemporaries who slew Zacharias son of Barachias (over 400 years before they were born)? Obviously not! But they were of the same moral class, “this generation,” that did do so—bearing the same moral fruits, filling up the measure of their fathers.** [Take note: this usage of “this generation” (Matt. 23:36) occurs in the *immediate context* to Matt. 24 of the Olivet Discourse.]

The fact that “all these things shall come upon this generation” (23:36) at a particular time (actually including the yet future 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel) *does not* alter the *qualitative, moral, non-temporal/non-chronological* meaning of “this generation” (as this passage makes clear), into a mere restricted temporal sense of “those living at the time.”

For example, suppose for a moment that the meaning of Matt. 24:34 was: “*This Jewish race* as such [which is another literal meaning for ‘generation’] shall not pass away until all these things take place.” The fact that “all these things” take place during a stipulated period of time *would not* give “this Jewish race” a *restricted temporal sense*—i.e., it would not restrict the starting and ending points of “this Jewish race” to a mere span of 40 or so years.

Or, to give another illustration, suppose it was said, “*This earth* shall not pass away until all these things take place.” The fact that “all these things” take place during a stipulated period of time *would not* give “this earth” a *restricted temporal sense*—i.e., it would not restrict the starting and ending points of “this earth” to a mere span of 40 or so years.

The point is this: the phrase “all these things take place” (Matt. 24:34, during the yet future 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel) does not in itself impart to, or require of “this generation” a restricted temporal/chronological sense. Whether “this generation” has or does not have such a sense in Matt. 24:34 must be based on other factors: the immediate and broad contexts of the Olivet Discourse and the vast connected whole of God’s prophetic truth—which have conclusively shown that “this generation” does not and cannot tolerate any *preterized* meaning here. The selective, isolated, pseudo-literal methodology of 70ADism simply will not do.

It seems evident that this frequent *qualitative, moral, non-temporal* usage of “generation” in Scripture (in both the Old and New Testaments) has been completely overlooked by some, and confused with the mere restricted temporal/chronological sense of generation (those living during a stipulated period of the time).

“God is in the generation of the righteous (Psa. 14:5).

“The use of the word *generation* in Matt 24:34 is thought to prove conclusively that the destruction of Jerusalem is meant. That is, ‘this generation’ must mean the then generation, the Lord’s contemporaries, would see the destruction of Jerusalem. This is taking the word in a temporal sense, rather than in a moral sense. And that is faulty in two ways:

“1. The expression “see all these things” (v. 33) refers to the events of Daniel’s 70th week. Observing them, they should conclude that the coming of the Son of man is near. The destruction of Jerusalem cannot be this coming because when they see these things then the coming is near -- not yet arrived, but near. The expression in v. 33 is not connected with v. 2 in that they are one and the same. Verse 2 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

“2. Generation does not refer to merely the contemporaries of the Lord Jesus living from then until AD 70. Nor does it mean only the group of people that shall be present about the time of the Lord’s appearing in glory. The word *generation* is used here concerning an ongoing moral class of persons. ‘Generation’ is often enough used to describe a moral class apart from time.

A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted for a generation (Psalm 22:30).

For the sons of this world [age] are, for their own generation more prudent than the sons of light (Luke 16:8).

Children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation (Phil 2:15).

“These clearly refer to a continuing moral class, and once the thought is grasped it is not difficult to see that this also is the thought in Matt 11:16; 12:41, 42, 45; 16:4; 23:36; Luke 9:41; 11:50 -- which compare with Rev 18:24; 17:6; Acts 2:40; etc. It is virtually certain that by “generation” [in these passages] the Lord does not mean merely His contemporaries. This is both a natural and a normal use of the word in Scripture. The antidispenational denial that generally a continuous moral class is meant by the word *generation* is a false conclusion constrained by other factors.

“Thus, not only *may* “generation” in Matt 24:34 mean a continuing moral class, as shown by the quoted Scriptures, but . . . [a true literal interpretation of the Olivet Discourse as recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in contrast to the selective, isolated, pseudo-literal Preterist approach—requires that] we *must* so understand it.”

“[William Kelly:] ‘This generation is not to pass till ALL *be* fulfilled (*genhtai*) [Luke 21:32]. No language can be more accurate. This Christ-rejecting, unbelieving, stubborn and rebellious generation of Jews should not pass away till then. A new generation [marked by an entirely different moral character] will follow. The expression has a moral, not a mere chronological, sense. Compare [Ps. 12:7] in contrast with the generation to come. See [Ps. 22:30, 31]. The clause therefore seems to be meant in its unlimited strength, and so put by the third Evangelist as to render all other applications impossible. Nor is there the least ground for taking it otherwise in the corresponding places of Matthew and Mark; but Luke demonstrates this.’ ”

"This generation" of Jews will be displaced by another generation: "a generation to come."—R.A. Huebner (*Elements of Dispensational Truth*, Volume 2, p. 209-210. Present Truth Publishers, 1998)

*Generation*, or *this generation*, as a class marked by a given moral character; a continuing moral class of persons, is established by a host of scriptures. Consider the following:

**Deut. 32:5** – “They have dealt corruptly with Him; Not His children’s is their spot: -- *A crooked and perverted generation!*”

**Deut. 32:20** – “And He said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be; For they are a *perverse generation*, Children in whom is no faithfulness.”

**Psalm 12:7, 8** – “Thou, Jehovah, wilt keep them, thou wilt preserve them from *this generation* for ever. The wicked walk about on every side, when vileness is exalted among the children of men.”

**Psalm 14:5** – “There were they in great fear; for God is in *the generation of the righteous.*”

**Psalm 22:30, 31** – “A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord *for a generation*. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done it.”

**Psalm 24:6** – “*This is the generation* of them that seek unto him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.”

**Psalm 49:19** – “It shall go to *the generation* of his fathers: they shall never see light.”

**Psalm 78:8** – “And might not be as their fathers, a *stubborn and rebellious generation*, a *generation* that prepared not their heart, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.”

**Psalm 112:2** – “His seed shall be mighty in the land; *the generation of the upright* shall be blessed.”

**Proverbs 30:11-14** – “*There is a generation* that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother; *there is a generation* that are pure in their own eyes, yet are not washed from their filthiness; *there is a generation*,--how lofty are their eyes, how their eyelids are lifted up! -- *a generation* whose teeth are swords, and their jaw-teeth knives, to devour the afflicted from off the earth, and the needy from among men.”

**Matthew 11:16** – “But to whom shall I liken *this generation*? It is like children sitting in the markets, which, calling to their companions . . .”

**Matthew 12:39** – “But he, answering, said to them, *A wicked and adulterous generation* seeks after a sign, and a sign shall not be given to it save the sign of Jonas the prophet.”

**Matthew 12:41, 42** – “Ninevites shall stand up in the judgment with *this generation*, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, more than Jonas is here. A queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with *this generation*, and shall condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, more than Solomon is here.”

**Matthew 12:45** – “Then he goes and takes with himself seven other spirits worse than himself, and entering in, they dwell there; and the last condition of that man becomes worse than the first. Thus shall it be to *this wicked generation* also.”

**Matthew 16:4** – “*A wicked and adulterous generation* seeks after a sign, and a sign shall not be given to it save the sign of Jonas. And he left them and went away.”

**Luke 9:41** – “And Jesus answering said, *O unbelieving and perverted generation*, how long shall I be with you and suffer you? Bring hither thy son.”

**Luke 11:50, 51** – “That the blood of all the prophets which has been poured out from the foundation of the world may be required of *this generation*, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias, who perished between the altar and the house; yea, I say to you it shall be required of *this generation.*”

**Luke 16:8** – “And the lord praised the unrighteous steward because he had done prudently. For the sons of this world are, for their *own generation*, more prudent than the sons of light.”

**Luke 17:25** – “But first he must suffer many things and be rejected of *this generation.*”

**Acts 2:40** – “And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, Be saved from *this perverse generation.*”

**Phil. 2:15** – “That ye may be harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God in the midst of a *crooked and perverted generation*; among whom ye appear as lights in the world.”

**Heb. 3:7-11** – “Wherefore, even as says the Holy Spirit, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness; where your fathers tempted me, by proving me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was wroth with *this generation*, and said, They always err in heart; and they have not known my ways; so I swore in my wrath, If they shall enter into my rest.”

In reading (and re-reading) these passages carefully, keeping in mind, again, that merely because certain things or moral actions are attributed to “this generation”—to this ongoing moral class of persons—at a certain point in time (whether past, present, or future), does not impart to, or require of “this generation” a restricted temporal/chronological sense; i.e., a sense which signifies merely those living in that stipulated period of time. **Rather, those living in that stipulated period of time are of such a character as to form part of, and be representative of, “this generation” (this ongoing moral class of persons).**

As noted previously, it is clear that the meaning of “this generation” in Matt. 24:34 of the Olivet Discourse, as “this Christ-rejecting, unbelieving, stubborn and rebellious generation of Jews,” *accords with the identical usage in the immediate preceding context* of Matt. 23:29-39.

But how does this meaning fit the immediate context of Matt.24:34 itself? How does it relate to the parable of the fig tree in verses 32-33? In light of that parable, why would our Lord proceed to make the declaration He did concerning “this Christ-rejecting, unbelieving, stubborn and rebellious generation of Jews,” that it would not pass away till all these things (24:4-32) were fulfilled?

“W. Kelly . . . explains that Jehovah will then gather a people emptied of self. It will be a nation all born of God that will enter the land when God gathers those elect ones (Rom. 11:26; Isa. 60:21). That nation will not be what is represented by the **cursed** fig tree [in Matt. 21:19]. What, then, is the significance of the fig tree [in Matt. 24:32]? [William Kelly:] ‘From the fig-tree learn the (or, its) parable’ (v. 32). What is the peculiar significance and propriety of the fig-tree here? It is the well-known symbol of the Jewish nationality. Thus we saw it, in chapter 21, bearing nothing but leaves -- that generation given up to the curse of the perpetual fruitfulness, whatever grace may do for the generation to come. In Luke 21, the word is, ‘Behold the fig-tree, and all the trees.’ Why this striking change? Because the Holy Ghost all through, and notably in that chapter, introduces ‘the Gentiles.’ Luke takes in a larger scope than Matthew, and expressly treats of Jerusalem’s sorrows in connection with “the times of the Gentiles.” Hence the difference even in the illustrative figures. Here it is the tree, not withered away, but with signs of vitality. ‘When its branch has now become tender and the leaves are shooting, ye know that summer is nigh; so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is nigh by the doors’ (i.e., the end of this age, and the beginning of the next under Messiah and the new covenant). And how solemnly the Savior warns that ‘this generation,’ this Christ-rejecting race in Israel, shall not pass till these things be fulfilled!’

“The ‘nation’ meant by the cursed fig tree [in Matt. 21:19] is Israel under the law. It is the first man, in the persons of the favored Jews, under testing, under the Mosaic Covenant. *That* nation will never produce fruit. When the godly Jewish remnant form the saved nation [in the Millennial Kingdom], they will be under the New Covenant, an entirely new order of things.”

“[‘This generation’] refers to a moral class of Israel, that Christ-rejecting generation of Israel that will bear no fruit -- as depicted by the cursed fig tree in Matt. 21:19. The fig tree spoken of here in Matt. 24:32 does not mean that cursed fig tree spoken of as ‘this generation.’ There can be no budding of *that*. We must either take this [fig tree parable in Matt. 24:32] in a general, analogical way, or if something specific about Israel is intended, then we must observe that Luke 21:30 says: *Behold the fig tree and all the trees . . .*”

“If Israel is meant [and it is], then I would suggest that this has something to do with **God’s preparation of the godly Jewish remnant that will compose the nation of Israel in the millennium**. And during the end of the age there will be preachers of the gospel of the kingdom, that the King and kingdom are coming shortly, which preachers will be received by some Gentiles (see Matt. 25:31ff, for the results of this). **This will form the nations (all the trees) at the beginning of the millennium.**”—R.A. Huebner (*Elements of Dispensational Truth*, Vol. 2, pp. 208-209. Present Truth Publishers, 1998)

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the land lament, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they **shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the one extremity of the heavens to the other extremity of them**. But **learn the parable from the fig-tree**: When already its branch becomes tender and produces leaves, ye know that the summer is near. Thus also ye, when ye see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors. **Verily I say to you, This generation will not have passed away until all these things shall have taken place.**” (Matt. 24:30-34)

“And then shall they see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory; and then shall He send His angels and **shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from end of earth to end of heaven**. But **learn the parable from the fig-tree**: when its branch already becomes tender and puts forth the leaves, ye know that the summer is near. Thus also ye, when ye see these things happening, know that it is near, at the doors. **Verily I say unto you, This generation shall in no wise pass away till all these things take place.**” (Mark 13:26-30)

“And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to come to pass, **look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws nigh**. And He spoke a parable to them: **Behold the fig-tree and all the trees**; when they already sprout, ye know of your own selves, on looking at them, that already the summer is near. So also ye, when ye see these things take place, **know that the kingdom of God is near**. **Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall in no wise pass away until all come to pass.**” (Luke 21:27-32)



The fig tree is “the well-know symbol of Jewish nationality,” and the parable of *the budding fig tree* represents “God’s preparation of the godly Jewish remnant that will compose the nation of Israel in the millennium.” Notice the “gathering of His elect,” the godly Jewish remnant, “from end of earth to end of heaven,” who will compose the new and true spiritual nation of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom, under their Messiah and their New Covenant. Notice “when ye see these things take place, know that the kingdom of God is near,” the inauguration of His Millennial Kingdom. Notice their “redemption [cf. ‘*redemption in Jerusalem,*’ Luke 2:38] draws nigh” for entrance into the Millennial Kingdom upon its establishment—with which compare Matt. 24:13, “he [*the elect, godly Jew*] that has endured to the end [*the end of the completion of the age, the Tribulation Period/70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel*], he shall be saved [*physically delivered to enter the Millennial Kingdom upon its establishment, as part of new nation of Israel, never to taste of death*; see also Matt. 24:22].”

“Therefore I say to you, that *the kingdom of God* shall be taken from you [cf. Matt. 21:19 and 24:34] and shall be given to a nation producing the fruits of it [cf. Matt. 24:32-33].” (Matt. 21:43)

This *budding* fig tree of Matt. 24:32 is in complete contrast to the *fruitless, cursed* fig tree of Matt. 21:19. The latter represents precisely “this generation” in Matt. 24:34, that ongoing class of Christ-rejecting, unbelieving, stubborn and rebellious generation of Jews that will never bear fruit, and which, He declares, shall in no wise pass away until all these things (of Matt. 24:4-32) are fulfilled. This ongoing moral class of Israel *is the nation of Matt. 21:43a, from whom the prospect and privilege of entering the “the kingdom of God has been taken;”* whereas the *budding* fig tree of Matt. 24:32—which represents God’s preparation of the godly Jewish remnant, which will subsequently form the new and true spiritual nation of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom under their New Covenant—is *the nation of Matt. 21:43b, to whom the kingdom “shall be given,” and which will “produce the fruits of it.”*

Thus, learn the parable from the fig-tree: When already its branch becomes tender and produces leaves [i.e., this points to the time when *God is calling and preparing* the godly Jewish remnant during the Tribulation Period/70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel], ye know that the summer is near. Thus also ye, when ye see all these things happening, know that it is near, at the doors [i.e., the end of the age, and the beginning of the next under their Messiah and their New Covenant, wherein the godly Jewish remnant will form the new and true spiritual nation of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom]. [Even so, and therefore,] Verily I say to you, This generation [this ongoing moral class of Christ-rejecting, unbelieving, stubborn and rebellious generation of Jews] will in no wise pass away until all these things take place [this generation of Jews as a whole will then indeed pass away, when Christ appears in glory and executes judgment on them, and will be displaced by the new class or generation of Jews—the new and true spiritual Israel in the Millennial Kingdom (*all Israel will then be righteous . . . saved*), under their Messiah and their New Covenant, with the law written in their hearts; see, e.g., Isa. 60:21; 66:8-9; Jer. 31:31-40; Rom. 11:26-27].

Before concluding this section on Matt. 24:34, brief notice will be made of two other (*non-preterizing*) interpretations of “this generation.”

“Mr. Alford is **not correct** in making . . . [‘this generation’] = ‘**this race,**’ **because the race of Israel is not to pass away when all these things are fulfilled;** but on the contrary Israel is then to reach its full blessing and glory as a people here below. The true force is, ‘this (Christ-rejecting, unbelieving) generation of Israel,’ not the mere existing generation, but such as bore the same moral fruits as those who then refused the Messiah.”—William Kelly (*The Christian Annotator*, 1856)

That is, the fact that “this generation” shall in no wise pass away “**till**” all these things take place, *implies and requires* that “this generation,” as a whole, shall indeed pass away *upon the fulfillment* of all these things. But this cannot be true of “the Jewish race”—as *it will never pass away*. Any notion to the contrary would contradict all revealed prophetic truth. [Note: the true interpretation of “this generation”—as the ongoing moral class of Christ-rejecting, unbelieving generation of Jews, which will not pass away till all these things of Matt. 24:4-32 are fulfilled—implicitly conveys the truth that the *Jewish race as such* would be preserved unto the Second Coming of Christ.]

There is another well-known and widely-held interpretation of “this generation” in Matt. 24:34, which even understands the meaning in essentially the same way that Preterists do, but which places it, not in the *then present* time when the Olivet Discourse was delivered, but in the *future* time of which the Olivet Discourse speaks: that is, the very “generation” of people *alive to see the beginning of “all these things” will see the end*—i.e., in the context of the *future* Tribulation Period/70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel (which is what Matt. 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 of the Olivet Discourse have been shown to be indisputably all about, excepting, of course, Luke 21:12-24).

“It is very possible to take it as a reference to the generation which will be living at the end time when the signs of Christ’s coming appear. The meaning then becomes that the same generation which sees the beginning will see the end. . . .this is the better [interpretation]. Although it is true that the Jewish race will continue until the end, the context does not support this view as well as the other. These words were spoken with the word ‘near’ . . . in view (verse thirty-two). When the tree is tender and it puts forth leaves,

then the summer is known to be near. Thus the first sign of the Son of Man's coming indicates its proximity. It is so close that the generation that is alive when the first sign appears will live to see the coming of Christ. This view faces one great objection. It is claimed by its opponents that the demonstrative pronoun 'this' (auth) prevents one from referring *genera* to any other generation than the contemporary one. . . . However, in so doing, they rigidly limit the basic meaning of the demonstrative. Winer writes, 'The pronoun . . . sometimes refers, not to the noun locally nearest, but to one more remote, which, as the principal subject, was *mentally* the nearest, the most present to the writer's thoughts . . .' The subject in the thought of Christ is the end time. It seems best, therefore, to refer *genera* to the future generation which shall be living at the time of Christ's second coming."—Stanley D. Toussaint (*Behold the King: A Study of Matthew*, pp. 279-280. Multnomah Press, 1981)

"And the Lord now impresses upon His disciples the *suddenness* with which all this will be accomplished. The fig-tree is once more chosen as a figure of Israel: and 'when her branch is new and tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near.' The fruit is there as soon as the leaves: thus the development is sudden indeed; summer in this way seems at once to set in: Israel's hope comes thus to sudden fruition. *The very generation that sees the beginning of these things will see the end.*"—F.W. Grant (*The Numerical Bible*)

However, this view does not seem to *accord with the broader context of the vast connected whole of God's prophetic truth (in which Preterism has no say whatsoever, and concerning which it cannot similarly raise the following objection—given its rather convenient pliability in dealing with the Holy Scriptures, which has no constraint laid upon it to abide by the vast connected whole of God's prophetic truth, and which is heedless to the dispensational truth it sets forth)*. Specifically, it seems that this view faces the same basic objection raised against the "Jewish race as such" view. That is, the fact that "this generation" shall in no wise pass away "*till*" all these things take place, *implies and requires* that 'this generation' of people, as a whole, shall indeed pass away *upon the fulfillment* of all these things . . . that the then living generation would, as a whole, pass away upon the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. But this cannot be true—for *part of* the generation alive during the future Tribulation Period/70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, will *never* pass away.

All Tribulation saints who have endured to the end (to the end of the completion of the age, Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week) shall be saved/physically delivered to enter the Millennial Kingdom (upon its establishment by the returning King) *alive in their natural/unglorified bodies*. *That part of the generation of people living at the time will not die or pass away*. Only *unbelievers* will be purged out and pass away under the judgment of God, and thus not enter the Millennial Kingdom *upon its establishment*. (Cf., e.g., 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Matt. 25:11-12, 30, 31-46; 24:13; 13:39-42, 49-50; 7:21-23; 18:3; Isa. 13:9; Ezek. 20:38; Zech.13:8-9; Mal. 4:1-3; Rom. 11:26-27; etc, etc. And to these should be added, of course, when rightly interpreted, Matt. 24:34!)

Tribulation believers, however, entering the Millennial Kingdom alive in their natural/unglorified bodies, will not be dying anytime soon—or *ever*. There is no scriptural basis to conclude that *any* of these believers who enter the Kingdom at its inauguration *will ever experience death*. **They will never die**. It is true that unbelieving "sinners," *born later on* within the Kingdom, may die during those Millennial days (Isa. 65:20; 66:24). But *believers* will not die. Death during the Millennial Kingdom Age will be restricted to, and be unmistakable evidence of the unbelieving and lost state of the sinner dying in his sins, Isa. 65:20; 66:24.

**"The righteous living of the millennium do not die."**—William Kelly (*The Great Olivet Prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ: Wherein are contrasted the Jewish and Christian Calling and Hope*)

**"There will be no death during the millennium — the thousand years — except of the sinner, who is accursed (Isa. 65:20)."**—William Kelly (*The Bible Treasury*, New Series Volume 9)

"We admit, from Isaiah, that there may be death among those on earth, during the millennium (not, of course, among the risen saints); but it is only spoken of as being judicial. It does not appear, that I see, that the godly will die even on earth during the millennium; **'as the days of a tree are the days of My people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands [Isa. 65:22].'**"—J.N. Darby (*The Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Prophetic*, Volume 2)

" 'And Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of Jehovah of hosts the holy mountain. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age.' [**Zech 8:4**] Mark, 'every man:' **he is looking onward to the day when death should not be, as we are told in Isaiah. 'Every man with his staff in his hand for very age' — not that there should not be the young, but that the old should not vanish away. It is the reversal of all past history — 'and he died,' 'and he died.' Under Messiah men will go on living and last out the whole millennial reign.**"—William Kelly (*Zechariah*)

**“The righteous** shall shoot forth **like a palm-tree**; he shall grow **like a cedar on Lebanon**. Those that are planted in the house of Jehovah shall flourish in the courts of our God: **They are still vigorous in old age, they are full of sap and green**; To shew that Jehovah is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.” (Ps. 92:12-15)

For if believers did die, would they not, therefore, have to be *resurrected*? But Scripture speaks only of a "first" and a second kind of resurrection (Rev. 20). The *first kind* of resurrection, of which *only* Christ and *believers* partake, *is completed prior to the commencement of the Millennium* (Rev. 20:4-6). The *second* resurrection occurs at the *conclusion* of the Millennium, and *all who participate in it will be cast into the Lake of Fire* (Rev. 20:5a-7, 11-15); that is, the second resurrection is for the *unsaved alone*. Thus there is *no room* for a resurrection of believers who are thought to die during the Millennium. That being the case, *neither is there room for the death of any believers* once the Millennial Kingdom commences (who will presumably, then, be glorified with immortal bodies at the conclusion of the 1,000 years, prior to the eternal state of the New Heavens and the New Earth).

Therefore, as the surviving Tribulation saints remain alive throughout the Millennial Kingdom and *never* actually taste of death, their "generation," as a whole, *cannot pass away*, and cannot be *said* to have passed away. But Matt. 24:34 requires that "this generation" (regardless of how it is understood) to indeed *pass away as a whole upon the fulfillment* of "all these things" (Matt. 24:4-32).

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