

THE GENERATION OF JESUS IN MATTHEW

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“Amen I say unto you, this Generation shall not Pass, till All these Things be Fulfilled.” (Matthew 24:34; cf., Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32).

What does Jesus mean by “this Generation”? Does it mean that those living at the time of Jesus would not Die until all of the end time prophecies Jesus had predicted came true, including his Second Coming? Or does it mean that before the identity of this particular historical Generation can be known, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ must first occur in the way that Orthodox Christian mythological Dogma has taught: a literal physical event, especially as believed by the Dispensationalists?

The latter interpretation is obviously not the plain meaning of the passage, but an inferred one, and it is based on two a priori assumptions: (1) Jesus did not come literally during his own Generation in the way that he was expected; and (2) since he did not come back in the time in which he was expected, his words, since he cannot Lie, must be reinterpreted in a way that they can still come true, to wit, in a time sometime in the Future, a time to defined by Biblical Prophecy as it unfolds in world events.

However, since the plain meaning of the passage is in line with the other sayings of Jesus in Matthew concerning this same “Generation,” the plain meaning is to be preferred. If Christ’s Prophecy as recorded in Matthew is True and his Second Coming really did occur during the Generation of Jesus, then it does indeed need to be reinterpreted, since it obviously did not come in the way it was expected. This seems to be the intent of the Gospel of John which reinterprets the Second Coming to be the Coming of the Paraclete, the Pneuma of Truth. (Cf., 1 John 2:1b-2; John 14:16-20; 15:26-27; 16:7-15.)

Let us first examine the Greek word used in Matthew to connote generation, to wit, genea: meaning “the time of a generation,” to wit, the average interval of time between the birth of parents

and the birth of their offspring (approx. 20 years), or the average interval of time between the birth of offspring and the death of their parents (approx. 40 years); or a group of individuals born and living and dying about the same time. These definitions are borne out in The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of Bible (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, Comfort Print Edition, 1995), p. 520, & Greek word 1074, page 19, genea, in the Greek Dictionary at the end,; as well as the definition for "generation" in The American Heritage College Dictionary (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 3rd Ed., 1993), p. 567.

Whichever definition you use, the average amount of time of a generation should be somewhere between 20 - 40 years. Thus, if we estimate that Jesus died in 30 A.D., and that the "Generation" that he spoke of was the Generation living during his own time, then Jesus was predicting that he would come into his Glory within 20 - 40 years after his Death. This means that Jesus was predicting that the coming of the Son of Man would happen no later than 70 A.D.

It is noteworthy that his prediction of the Coming of the Son of Man by the year 70 A.D. coincided with the destruction of Herod's Temple in 70 A.D. (Matthew 24:1-3; Mark 13:1-4; Luke 21:5-7.) This is especially in light that Jesus linked his Second Coming with the Destruction of Herod's Temple. (Matthew 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21.) In other words the Temple was Destroyed exactly to the year 40 years after Christ's Death, to wit, within the time predicted. Moreover, most of the woes predicted for Israel in Jesus's prediction also actually occurred at the hands of the Romans and other radical Jews at the same time. Considering the history of prophecy, this was an incredible prediction, except for one thing: the Son of Man did not return as expected.

In fact, if it were not for the evidence in the Gospel of John, we would be left with no other reasonable explanation for the plain meaning of "this Generation" than that Jesus had been wrong. Fortunately, since John was written after 70 A.D. and teaches that the Second Coming of Jesus was actually the Coming of the Paraclete, whom Paul calls "the Lord, Christ in us, the Hope of Glory" (2 Corinthians 3:17; Colossians 1:27), we can easily reinterpret the saying of Jesus away from its

Enochian Apocalyptic scenario to a more Pneumatik one.

Unfortunately, this explanation is not good enough for the Dispensationalists. Since Jesus did not literally come to Earth in the Clouds of Heaven with his Angels in a literal physical manner, the Dispensationalists have determined to ignore the actual historical events that occurred during the Jewish War with Rome, as well as the Pneumatik teachings of John and Paul.

And even though the imagery of the Coming of the Son of Man, especially when read in light of Daniel 7, appears to be a purely Heavenly (Pneumatik) event, the Dispensationalists have chosen to ignore all of the passages in the Bible, including the writings of Paul, which indicate a strong belief that all prophetic events would be wrapped up before 70 A.D., to wit, within their own lifetime (see, e.g., Romans 13:11; 1 Corinthians 7:29-31; 15:51-53). Was Paul wrong too?

It thus appears that Dispensationalists ignore the amazing historical accuracy of the prophecy of Jesus concerning his Generation because it interferes with their contrary interpretation of the method of the Second Coming. As stated above, the best way to prove the plain meaning of this passage is to show that genea is never once used in the manner suggested by the Dispensationalists elsewhere in Matthew. We will now examine these passages:

“But whereunto shall I liken this Generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a Daimon. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a man Gluttonous, and a Wine Drunkard, a friend of Tax Collectors and Sinners [Fornicators]. But Sophia is Justified by her Children.” (Matthew 11:16-19.)

“But he Answered and Said unto them, An Evil and Adulterous Generation seeketh after a Sign; and there shall no Sign be given to it, but the Sign of the Prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was Three Days and Three Nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of Man be Three Days and Three Nights in the Heart of the Earth. The people of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this Generation, and shall Condemn it: because they Repented at the Preaching of Jonah; and, Behold, a Greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South shall rise up in the Judgment with this Generation, and shall Condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the Sophia of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

“When the Unclean Pneuma is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.

Then goeth he, and taketh with himself Seven other Pneumas more Wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that person is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this Wicked Generation.” (Matthew 12:39-45.)

“A Wicked and adulterous Generation seeketh after a Sign; and there shall no Sign be given unto it, but the Sign of the Prophet Jonah. And he left them, and departed.” (Matthew 16:4.)

“Then Jesus Answered and Said, O faithless and perverse Generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him to me. And Jesus rebuked the Daimon; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.” (Matthew 17:17-18.)

“Ye Serpents, ye Generation of Vipers, how can ye escape the Damnation of Sheol. Wherefore, behold, I send unto you Prophets, and men of Sophia, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the Earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zechariah son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the Temple and the Altar. Amen I say unto you, All these Things shall come upon this Generation.” (Matthew 23:33-36.)

“Immediately after the Tribulation of those days shall the Sun be darkened, and the Moon shall not give her light, and the Stars shall fall from Heaven, and the Powers of the Heavens shall be shaken: and then shall Appear the Sign of the Son of Man in Heaven: and then shall all the Tribes of the Earth mourn, and they shall See the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory. And he shall send his Angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his Elect from the Four Winds, from one end of Heaven to the other.

“Now learn a Parable of the Fig Tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall See All these Things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Amen I say unto you, this Generation shall not pass, till All Things have been fulfilled. Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but my Rhemas shall not pass away. But of that day and hour, knoweth no man, no, not the Angels of Heaven, but my Father only.” (Matthew 24:29-36; Mark adds that the Son of Man is also ignorant of the day and hour [Mark 13:32].)

Our reading of “this Generation” is further supported by two key passages in Matthew where Jesus teaches that his Coming in Glory with the Angels will definitely occur within the lifetimes of those living with him:

“And ye shall be hated of all for my Name's sake: but he that endureth to the End shall be Saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for Amen I Say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man Come.” (Matthew 10:22-23.)

“For the Son of Man shall come in the Glory of his Father with his Angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Amen I Say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not Taste of Death, till they See the Son of Man Coming in his Kingdom.” (Matthew 16:27-28.)

The Jesus of Matthew clearly taught that the coming of the Son of Man (the Second Coming) would occur within 40 years of his death, that is, within his own Generation. (Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:6, written around 58-60 A.D.). It is therefore unreasonable to assume, as do the Dispensationalists, that the genea of Matthew 24:34 is some other unspecified Future Generation that will only be identified by certain events occurring first, such as the restoration of the nation of Isreal and/or the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. The same arguments would apply as well to the use of genea in the other two Synoptic Gospels (Mark 8:12; 8:38; 9:19; 13:30; Luke 7:31; 9:41; 11:29-32,50-51; 21:32).

As stated above, the Pneumatik interpretation of the Second Coming is to be preferred, especially since it concurs with the original prophecy of the Coming of the Son of Man in the Clouds of Heaven in Daniel 7:13-14, where the Event is purely Heavenly and not Earthly. Thus, Christ's Second Coming began when he Ascended to the Right Hand of YHWH in Heaven, as documented in Daniel 7 (cf., Ephesians 1:17-23), and became Complete with the Destruction of the Temple, since his Pneuma took its place. (Cf., John 2:18-21.)

Every time a Believer receives the Holy Pneuma by the Right of Sonship, Christ Comes Again into that Believer's heart. Christ is the Lord, and the Lord is the Pneuma. (2 Corinthians 3:17.)

Finally, if our reasoning is correct, it would also mean that what is commonly called the Rapture, to wit, the Event taught as a Mystery in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, would also be a Pneumatik Event, and not a literal physical event in the Atmosphere above Earth.

Thus, Pneumatikally, the Rapture would occur when a Dead Believer's pneuma “Ascends” to the Right Hand of YHWH, with Jesus meeting that Believer personally in the “Air,” as he did for Stephen following his stoning. (Acts 7:54-60.) This interpretation is also in agreement with Paul's teaching that the Rapture occurs immediately after the Dead are first Raised Up into the Air (1 Thessalonians 4:17), an Event which is wholly Pneumatik.