

Title: Is This The Last Generation?

Text: ~~24:32-35~~ *Matthew 24:1-36*

Since the day ^{*Jesus Christ*} ~~Jesus Christ~~ ascended into heaven, no generation has had so much reason to believe it was the last generation. ~~//look/at/the~~
 A review of our studies of prophecy over the past few weeks should have revealed that since the first great sign of our Lord's return there have been at least 8 other signs. A review:

1. World War I --- Matthew 24:1-8

Four Parts To This First Sign

- a) World war started by two nations
- b) Famines
- c) Pestilence
- d) many earthquakes at once

From this first great sign came the other "birth Pains."

- 1. Occultism -- 2 Tim. 4:1-2
- 2. Grievous Times -- 2 Tim. 3:1-5
- 3. Israel - A Miracle Nation - Ezekiel 37:1-11
- 4. Babylon - The Mother of Harlots -- Revelation 17:1-6
- 5. Like the Days of Noah -- Luke 17:26-30
- 6. Rise of Russia -- Eze 38-39 (Did not study)
- 7. The Rapture of the Church -- I Thess. 4:13-18

Each of these signs, or "birth pains" as suggested in Matthew 24.8, has become more intense, indicating that the ^{*signs are*} ~~moment~~ of "travail" ~~is~~ ^{*are*} at hand in this age.

The uniqueness of ~~the~~ our study of prophecy is the basing of these signs in the first great ^{sign}, World War I. I will admit that some of the signs appeared prior to 1914, just as the conditions that produced the first world war rumbled on long before the first shot was fired. But ^{you} we must keep in mind that these signs are conditions that will crescendo in the Tribulation period and they require time to develop. For example, the thinking pattern of mankind must be conditioned properly for a one-world government to form. The world was not ready for it in 1917. But the big cry today is for peace. Many, many people in high places of authority are talking seriously about one-world government as the only source for the survival of mankind. This sign could be fulfilled in our time, and so it is with all the signs.

I believe the stage is set; the characters are in place; some minor "make-up" work might be done, but there is nothing major lacking before Christ comes for the "believers." As I have said, we may see the one-world government; but we will not see the Antichrist sign the treacherous covenant with Israel = not if we are Christians that is.

To refer again to the illustration of a woman about to deliver her child, it would seem that the world is ready to rush to the delivery room for the seven-year tribulation period of human trial.

As heavy as these signs are in suggesting the imminent coming of Christ, we have even clearer evidence from our Lord himself. We have only examined Matthew 24:1-8 so far in our study; now it is time to finish the Lord's teaching on this subject. Matthew 24:1-8 discusses the infallible sign = world world one. Verses 9-31 reveals the sequence of future events. And verses 32-36 draws a significant conclusion based on this sequence of events.

It is now time to ~~study~~ "learn a parable of the ~~fig~~ fig tree." Many prophecy students see only Israel here because Israel is often referred to symbolically in Scripture as a fig tree. But we notice in the parallel passage in Luke 21:29, Jesus said, "Behold the fig tree, and all the trees." He was not referring only to Israel as a "budding" nation, important as that is, but to the lesson of nature: when trees bud, the season is about to change.

"So likewise you, when you shall see all these things, know that it is near..." In other words, when all the signs mentioned appear -- World War I, famines, pestilence, and earthquakes - you know that Jesus' return is near, even at the doors.

Read vs 33-34

THESE THINGS

There are two sets of "these thing" in verses 33-34. If you fail to distinguish between them, you will not understand what our Lord said. "These things" are divided into two parts. We will call them "These things #1; and these things #2." These things #1 in verse 33 refer back to the events of verses 7 and 8. These things #2 refers to the prophetic future, including the Tribulation ~~the~~ and the glorious appearing of Christ. (Page 166 of Tim LaHaye - The Beginning of The End)

Our Lord's meaning in verses 32 and 33, then, is that just as a tree's buds indicate summer is coming, so "these things #1 would mean the Lord's coming is near, "even at the doors." We can thus know the season of his return.

→ "These Things #1 (V. 33) Refer Back to vs 7-8
 WWI - Followed by (1) Pestilence (2) Famines (3) Earthquakes

"These Things #2 (vs 34) = This generation shall not pass away until all "These Things" be fulfilled
 ALL The Birth Pains Leading up to the Rapture -

Great care should be taken not to set dates in this connection. Jesus said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father only." The ~~st~~ study of prophecy has probably suffered more from date setters than anything else. On the other hand, this passage clearly indicates we can know the season. It is my firm belief that we are not only in the season, but in the latter portion of it. We must not make our interpretation any more specific than the Lord makes his prophecy. As we shall see, Jesus indicated that the season could last as long as a generation.

THE KEY GENERATION

Now we are ready to examine the key to this whole passage as it relates to the time of Jesus' coming, in answer to the disciples' question: "When shall these things be?" The key is found in verse 34. Jesus said, "This generation shall not pass, till all these things^{#2} be fulfilled." The crucial issue, then, concerns the meaning of "This generation."

Only three possibilities are open. One is the Jewish nation itself, but as I have mentioned, Jesus was not using "fig tree" in a spiritual sense here. He was referring to the tree as an object lesson regarding seasons. Another suggestion is the time of the disciples, but obviously their generation is past. So the only conclusion that fits the passage relates to the generation that sees the "birth Pains." "When you shall see all these things" which the disciples did not see - Jesus was referring to the generation that would be alive and old enough to comprehend the signs as they are being fulfilled. No other explanation fits the context.

In Greek the demonstrative pronoun HAUTE(this) always refers to the person or thing mentioned before it. The thing mentioned just before "generation" involves those who see the signs of the end of the age.

Putting all this together, we can now recognize this ^{key} strategic generation. It is the generation that "sees" the four =part sign of verse 7, or the people who saw the First World War. We must be careful here not to become dogmatic, but it would seem that these people are witnesses to the events, not necessarily participants in them. That would suggest they were at least old enough to understand the events of 1914-1918, not necessarily old enough to go to war.

= How old does one have to be to understand that the world is in a great war and that millions of people are dying by disease and starvation, or that the earth is being shaken by earthquakes? It would be foolhardy to say exactly, but perhaps somewhere between five years and 10 years of age in 1917. I believe it is that generation which our Lord said "will not pass away till all those things: #2 be fulfilled."

HOW LONG IS A GENERATION?

+ We may logically ask next, "How long is a generation?" Psalms 90:10 provides insight into this subject. "The days of our years are three-score years and ten; and if, by reason of strength, they be four-score years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow.." This does not mean that the final generation is limited to seventy or eighty years; the psalmist is acquainting us with the general length of a generation.

We should weigh the Lord's words very carefully here. He said, "This generation shall not pass until all these things be fulfilled." How many people make up a generation? No particular number; just one person who comprehended the signs could represent the "generation." Jesus was aware that the last generation before his coming would be marked by longevity. We are acquainted with 90 year-old people, so "this generation" is not limited to eighty years. However, neither should we expect the entire generation to pass away before Jesus returns.

HOW MUCH LONGER DO WE HAVE?

All of us know gray-haired members of the generation that experienced the events of World War I. I know several who have already gone to be with the Lord, so the people of that generation do not have much more time on this earth. I refuse to set any date limits, for the Lord didn't, but he did specify a generation's experiences and said that he would return during that period. We are in the twilight of that generation - that I firmly believe. How much longer God will spare this world, only he knows. But if ever there was a generation that should live every moment as though Christ is about to come, it is this one.

- If you think the above teachings indicate that time is short, you are right. But if you are a Christian, keep in mind that Christ is coming to take his people seven years before the end of the age.

Unbelievers will have up to seven additional years after Christians leave, but it will be the worst years of their lives. It is risky, if not fatal, to wait until Christ has taken his church out of the world before becoming a Christian. Paul warns in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 that people who know the truth about Christ and reject him will be deceived into believing the false messiah of the end time.

Jesus said, "now is the accepted time; today is the day of salvation." I urge you to invite him into your life if you have never done so.

And Christians - now is the time to witness for christ. If we believe that Christ will come again, then we should be out telling people about christ. Oh, how can we do anything less.

If you knew when the world was going to be destroyed, would you warn everyone you could to get ready? Of course you would. Well, if you are a Christian, after hearing and studying these prophecies you ought to know that the end is near.

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The time for waiting to witness and using excuses for not witnessing is past; If we compare our days to Noah's, I would say the storm clouds are gathering. Soon the door to survival, Jesus the Christ, is going to be closed, and God will thunder judgment upon this generation. If listeners heed your warning, they will be eternally grateful; if they reject it, they will experience ultimate despair. But it is high time we Christians recognize that we are in the warning business. It is the Christians job to tell: "Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."
