

8. The Fig Tree

Then he told this parable: **"A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any.** So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' " 'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.' "

(Luke 13:6-9 NIV)

Jesus told this parable towards the end of His three and a half year ministry. It was just before He began making His final journey to Jerusalem to present Himself to the people there on the 10th Nisan 33 AD,¹ when He rode into the city on a donkey and it's colt (Matthew 21:1-11). This parable of the Fig Tree is the first of 3 significant lessons relating to the fig tree, and it laid the foundation for what followed a few days later while Jesus was teaching in Jerusalem.

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, the nation of Israel is often represented as a Fig Tree, or an Olive Tree, or a Vine. The vineyard itself represented the land of Israel, in particular, the city of Jerusalem. We shall be considering the vineyard in more detail in the next parable, *The Vineyard Farmers*, but in the meantime we shall be focusing on the Fig Tree. We have considered the Olive Tree in other articles available on the website.

These three fruit trees represented Israel's original intended role of being God's anointed Prophet (the Fig Tree), speaking out God's words to the world and bearing good fruit; His Kingdom (the Vineyard) in which the judgments of God would be manifested to the world; and His Priest (the Olive Tree), mediating between God and mankind, and bringing spiritual illumination. The ultimate fulfilment of these fruit trees is in Jesus Himself, Who, as the Messiah, the Anointed One, is the perfect Prophet, King, and High Priest of God.

The Fig Tree

In the above parable, the owner of the vineyard is Yahweh, the God of Israel, and the gardener or keeper of the vineyard is Jesus the Messiah (or Christ). Through Christ, Yahweh had been visiting His vineyard, Jerusalem, for 3 years to look for fruit on His fig tree, Israel – but He had not found any. This had particular relevance to the religious leaders of the Jews who represented the people before God. Due to its lack of fruit over a three-year period, judgment is pronounced upon the nation to cut it down.

Yet the gardener, Christ, intercedes for the nation to allow them one more year to bear fruit. During that time, He will dig the soil and put manure on it, that is, seek to bring the nation to repentance in order for them to bring forth good fruit. But if they still do not bear good fruit after that time, then the tree is to be cut down. This 'extra year' was an example of God's mercy and grace as manifested in, and through, Christ.

Sadly, as we know from Scripture and history, during that fourth year the Jews crucified their Messiah, and shortly after that they rejected His servants as well, eventually putting Stephen to death as the first Christian martyr. So judgment came upon the Jews and Jerusalem, cutting down the fruitless fig tree – although it didn't actually occur until almost 40 years later in 70 AD due to an era of grace. Nevertheless, the fig tree was cursed; the judgment was pronounced; and the nation of Judah withered away.

A New Fruit Tree

There is also an allusion here to the Law of Planting New Fruit Trees in Leviticus 19:23-25.

“When you enter the land and plant any kind of fruit tree, regard its fruit as forbidden (*Heb. uncircumcised*). For three years you are to consider it forbidden (*Heb. uncircumcised*); it must not be eaten. **In the fourth year all its fruit will be holy, an offering of praise to the LORD.** But in the fifth year you may eat its fruit. In this way your harvest will be increased. I am the LORD your God.” (NIV)

When planting a new fruit tree, the Israelites were not allowed to eat the fruit of it for three years. It was to be treated as though it was uncircumcised and unclean, and therefore, they were forbidden to eat it. In the fourth year, they were still not allowed to eat it, but the whole crop of that year had to be offered as firstfruits to Yahweh via the priests at the Tabernacle or Temple. Only the priests could partake of this firstfruit praise offering. Then in the fifth year, the Israelites could enjoy the fruit. If they obeyed this law then they would be blessed with an ever-increasing harvest of fruit.

When Jesus came to minister to the lost sheep of the house of Israel in the land, He was planting a new fruit tree – the Tree of Life, the New Covenant. The people could not fully enter into this covenant and eat its fruit for three years while they remained uncircumcised in their hearts. Yet this tree was gradually bearing fruit in a little flock, the true Israel of God. But it wasn't until the fourth year that the firstfruits were offered to God at the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost while the small group of believers were in the temple courts.²

The spiritual Body-Bride of Christ, the true Assembly of God, the Royal Priesthood, were the firstfruits being offered as a praise offering. After that, in the great Fifth Year, the era of Grace, the fruit of the New Covenant Tree of Life became a blessing to both Jews and Gentiles alike, bearing good fruit throughout the whole world.

Good and Bad Figs

Over 500 years earlier, the prophet Jeremiah had warned the people of Judah and Jerusalem that God would judge their wickedness and fruitlessness.

“I will take away their harvest, declares the LORD. There will be no grapes on the vine. **There will be no figs on the tree, and their leaves will wither.** What I have given them will be taken from them.”

(Jeremiah 8:13 NIV)

During the time of the Babylonian Exile, when the judgments had already begun, Jeremiah was given a vision of two baskets of figs being offered to God in front of the temple in Jerusalem. One basket had very good figs, the kind that ripen early, while the other was full of bad figs that couldn't be eaten. He was told that the good figs represented the people who had obeyed God in submitting to the yoke of Babylon, knowing that this was God's chastening upon the people; while the bad figs represented those who were in rebellion against God, seeking to fight their divine chastening every way they could. God told Jeremiah that the good figs would be accepted, while the bad figs would be destroyed (Jeremiah 24).

Jesus' words echoed the words of Jeremiah concerning the good figs and the bad figs. The good figs represented those Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah, while the bad figs represented the rest of the nation who rejected Him and His prophetic words. The latter would remain under a curse, while the former would be blessed as God's true people, the true Israel, inheriting the promises and the covenant blessings promised to the nation.

The Cursed Fig Tree

During the final couple of days of Jesus' ministry, just before His death at Passover in the spring of 33 AD, a very significant event occurred, which was also a continuation of the parable of the Fig Tree.

"Early in the morning, as he was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. **Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves.** Then he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!" Immediately the tree withered. When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" they asked."

(Matthew 21:18-20 NIV)

"The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it... In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! **The fig tree you cursed has withered!**"

(Mark 11:12-14, 20-21 NIV)

This special fig tree was situated somewhere on the Mount of Olives near Bethany, outside Jerusalem. This whole episode was a parable in action. Jesus came to look for fruit on this fig tree because He was hungry. The purpose of the tree was to produce fruit to eat, and Yahweh the Creator needed some breakfast from it – yet He found nothing. If this had been a good fruit-bearing fig tree, then there would've been some early ripe figs or at the least, some late figs left over from the previous year for Jesus to eat, even though it was not the general season for harvesting figs.

Nevertheless, there should also have been plenty of green unripe figs, as they bud before the leaves come out in early spring, and this tree had leaves. So this tree had the appearance of being alive and fruitful, *yet it had no fruit at all, but only leaves.* So it was cursed, and its leaves withered immediately. The spirit of life

within it was cut off due to the power of Christ's words. The following day, Peter drew attention to it again, seeing that the whole tree had now withered from the roots.

Now contrary to how it may appear, Jesus did not curse the fig tree because He was annoyed that He couldn't have some breakfast! There was a very good reason as to why the Father told Him to do this – the fig tree was the nation of Israel. On the outside, the nation looked alive, serving God at the temple with religious fervour – yet spiritually, they were fruitless. They relied on their own ability and man-made traditions, covering their nakedness with the fig leaves of fleshly works, recalling the desperate act of the first covenant pair to cover the shame of their transgression in the Eden paradise story (Genesis 3:7).³

At best, the religious leaders were a basket of bad figs. In view of the events that were about to transpire at Passover, and throughout the following year, Jesus prophetically pronounced the curse upon Jerusalem and the people of Israel. As a result of this, the fig tree withered and died. This is the inevitable final end of all flesh and its works – withered, dead fig leaves! The meaning of this parable could also be applied to Christendom, generally speaking, as the Christian Church is the continuation of God's fig tree; and she also is in danger of being cut down in judgment, for judgment always begins with God's people.

Jesus went on to use this miraculous sign as a means of teaching the disciples about faith and God's power, but the meaning of this sign is found in the parable of the Fig Tree. It was during these few days that Jesus also taught the parable of the Vineyard Farmers, which we shall consider later, and He also completed the third instalment of the parable of the fig tree.

The Fig Tree Will Live

Now let us consider the final instalment of the parable of the fig tree.

“Now learn this lesson (or parable) from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. *I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.*”

(Matthew 24:32-34 NIV)

Jesus went on to tell His disciples that the parable of the fig tree doesn't end with the curse – the Fig Tree, the true nation of Israel, would burst into life as the summer of the kingdom of God drew near (Luke 21:29 adds “... the fig tree and all the trees” indicating that all nations would be showing signs of life at this time). In the same way as a fig tree begins to bloom and sprout early fruit and leaves in the spring, heralding the approaching of summer, when the figs would be ripe for harvesting, so the true Israel of God would burst into life as all the things that had been prophesied would come to pass within that first-century generation. This was to be the sign that the kingdom of God was near, right at the door, because summer was coming and the fig tree of Israel would be restored and would finally bear fruit!

Nevertheless, the question needs to be asked, what did Jesus mean when He said, "I tell you the truth, **this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened?**" (cf. Matthew 24:34; also Mark 13:30 & Luke 21:32)

"This Generation Will Certainly Not Pass Away Until..."

Firstly, it is important to note that in the Greek, all three synoptic gospel writers record the same thing in the Olivet Discourse. Jesus begins by saying 'amen' or 'truly', and 'I tell you', to emphasise the importance and truthfulness of what He was about to say. He then uses a double negative 'by no means' or 'definitely not' to emphasise strongly that this generation 'will *certainly not* pass away' until 'all these things' that he had been talking about had occurred. He was emphasising how soon 'these things' were actually going to take place! To make it mean something else in the distant future empties it of its true import.

Many times throughout His ministry to Israel, Jesus spoke about "*this wicked and adulteress generation,*" and this always referred to those who were alive at that time in the 1st century. A generation was usually understood to be anywhere between 20 and 40 years, 40 being the upper limit due to the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness for ancient Israel, until that 'exodus' generation had died having failed to enter the Promised Land (cf. Numbers 14:29-35). The number forty also symbolises probation or testing.

For forty years I was angry with that generation;
I said, 'They are a people whose hearts go astray,
and they have not known my ways.'
So I declared on oath in my anger,
'They shall never enter my rest.'"

(Psalm 95:10-11 NIV)

All of these themes are being tied together in Hebrews 4:1-11, where the writer, quoting from Psalm 95 above, was preparing and encouraging the Jewish Christians of 'this generation' to enter the Sabbath-rest of Christ's coming kingdom. This letter would've been written well before 70 AD, probably during the early-to-mid-60's. Elsewhere in Hebrews these Jewish Christians were being warned about falling back into the temple worship of Judaism because its days were numbered and the fiery judgment of God was about to fall upon Jerusalem and the temple – exactly as Jesus had prophesied in his Olivet Discourse (cf. Hebrews 10:19-39; 12:25-29).

As we noted earlier, Jesus had already pronounced judgment upon that generation during His final week of ministry. It was 'this generation' who were about to reject the true Messiah and His Apostles.

"And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, all this will come upon **this generation.**"

(Matthew 23:35-36 NIV)

Now permit me to digress a little to consider the translation of the Greek word *genea*. Some bible versions put 'race' in as a footnote for 'generation' in these texts indicating that the Greek word *genea* can mean 'race' as well. This is rather misleading, and one of the apparent reasons for this 'interpretive' footnote is that the translators are clearly following the popular 'futurist' interpretation that is often the view of dispensationalists.⁴

The 'genea=race' view teaches that in some contexts the phrase "*this generation*" is referring to the whole wicked generation of unbelieving Israel, beginning many centuries before Christ and continuing right through to the end of the age (cf. Matthew 12:39-45). This gives the word '*genea*' the meaning of 'race' in the broader sense.

So, according to this view, the phrase '*this generation*' can have a wider application, depending on the context, so that it can carry the meaning of 'race' and not just a particular 'generation.'

Yet nowhere in Matthew's gospel does the phrase 'this generation' mean anything else but the generation then living; yet according to the futurist view, in the context of Matthew 24:34 quoted earlier, '*this generation*' is referring to the final generation of unbelieving Israel who will see all these things unfold (that is, the various signs and events of Christ's Return), and they will not completely pass away until all these things have occurred - which includes the visible return of Christ Himself. Only then will the wicked generation 'pass away' and be no more.

This view only makes sense if the whole discourse is removed from its original context and then superimposed onto a foreign interpretive grid such as Premillennial Dispensationalism. If this were true then Jesus' emphatic statement about 'this generation' not passing away would become a little redundant. If He meant to say that the *race* of Israel would not pass away until all these things occurred at the end of the age (over 2000 years later), then not only is this irrelevant for the disciples of the 1st century, whom He was talking to, but it would also imply that the race of Israel will pass away in the end, after the events - yet according to dispensationalists, Israel will continue on forever!

No, I do not accept this as being good exegesis. The only viable interpretation of 'this generation,' as stated above, in accordance with sound exegesis, would be that this refers to the generation of Jews living at that time in the first century, from 30-70 AD, who would experience all these things coming upon Judah and Jerusalem via the Jewish/Roman war of that period, and the subsequent Day of the Lord (the Parousia; Gk. *presence*).

The Greek word *genea* translated as *generation* is widely recognised in most concordances as denoting the generation of people living at that time. If Jesus had meant to say 'generations' in the plural, or 'race' even, then the gospel writers, under inspiration of the Spirit, would've recorded it that way, but they didn't! Jesus clearly meant that judgment was going to arrive on the generation living at that time in the 1st century, and all these things were going to occur before 'this generation' had passed away.⁵

Destruction & Restoration

Therefore, Jesus was clearly stating that judgment was going to fall on the generation of Jews that He was talking to (that is, His contemporaries) - and it did, within 40 years!

"And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. **Truly I tell you, all this will come on this generation.**"

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

(Matthew 23:35-39 NIV)

'This generation' would receive the ultimate generational curse of the Law of Moses, connecting them with all of their murderous forefathers of previous generations. Their ultimate sin would be murdering the Messiah, the Son of God. Even at that time, Jesus pronounced a curse upon the temple, telling Jerusalem that *'your house is left to you desolate.'* Hence, as subsequently stated in His Olivet Discourse, *"all these things will be arriving on **this generation**"* because they had not recognised the time of God's coming to them in the form of Jesus as the Messiah.

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, **because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.**"

(Luke 19:41-44 NIV)

As Jesus had approached Jerusalem a week earlier during His 'triumphal entry' He'd uttered these fateful words, which were fulfilled almost 40 years later when the Roman armies under Titus surrounded the city of Jerusalem in 70 AD and laid siege to it for 5 months. They eventually built a wall of wooden stakes around the whole city using all the trees in the vicinity for miles around, cutting it off completely, to starve the inhabitants. Thousands of Jews were slaughtered in the process, and the whole city and the temple complex was totally destroyed, and not one stone was left on another, particularly in the sanctuary area.

All these things came upon 'this generation' just as Jesus had forewarned them. He had come to cast fire on the land – and now the time had arrived to cast this fire of God's wrath and vengeance upon the city and its environs.

"I have come to bring fire on the earth (or land), and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed!"

(Luke 12:49-50 NIV)

This was a clear reference to Deuteronomy 32:22 where the fire of God's wrath would fall upon Israel to destroy the land – like heaven and earth passing away. These divine judgments are also being portrayed in hyperbolic and apocalyptic-type language in other similar passages.

For a fire will be kindled by my wrath,
one that burns down to the realm of the dead below.
It will devour the earth and its harvests
and set afire the foundations of the mountains.

(Deuteronomy 32:22 NIV)

I looked at the earth,
and it was formless and empty;
and at the heavens,
and their light was gone.
I looked at the mountains,
and they were quaking;
all the hills were swaying.
I looked, and there were no people;
every bird in the sky had flown away.
I looked, and the fruitful land was a desert;
all its towns lay in ruins
before the LORD, before his fierce anger.

This is what the LORD says:

"The whole land will be ruined,
though I will not destroy it completely.
Therefore the earth will mourn
and the heavens above grow dark,
because I have spoken and will not relent,
I have decided and will not turn back."

(Jeremiah 4:23-28 NIV)

I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, **as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind.** The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! **For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?"**

(Revelation 6:12-17 NIV)

Yet even though the bad figs would be destroyed in the Day of the Lord, Jesus also confirmed that, even after being crushed in the winepress of God's wrath, a remnant would ultimately be restored as a fruitful Fig Tree and a fruitful Vine, as a nation grafted back into their own Olive Tree, brought back from the dead, to serve their God in righteousness and holiness in the kingdom of the heavens; just as the prophets had foretold.

Then the Tree of Life (Christ and His people) would bear its crops of fruit for the nations of the earth to feed on, and the leaves of the Tree would be for the healing of the nations; which nations would also include Israel according to the flesh from then on (Revelation 2:7; 22:2; Ezekiel 47:12). This is the true Restoration, Reconciliation & Deliverance of all Israel.

Endnotes

¹ I accept the year of Christ's death and resurrection as 33 AD as opposed to the other most probable alternative of 30 AD. See Prof. Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology, Revised Edition* (1998, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.) & Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of The Life of Christ*, (1977, Zondervan). I therefore see Christ's ministry as beginning in about autumn 29 to spring 30 AD, depending on whether one accepts a three-year ministry or a three-and-a-half-year ministry. I accept the three-and-a-half-year ministry of Jesus. For the date of Christ's crucifixion being 3rd April 33 AD, see the above works by Harold W. Hoehner, & in particular, Prof. Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology, Revised Edition* (1998, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.) pp. 359-369, especially sections 629 & 631.

"The result of this investigation is that the two most probable dates, astronomically and calendrically, are Friday, Apr 7, A.D. 30, and Friday, Apr 3, A.D. 33" (Finegan, p. 366)

² It is commonly believed that the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost occurred while the disciples were in an upper room in Jerusalem. For many years now I have disagreed with this scenario and have instead taught that the disciples were in the temple courts, with the emphasis that this was a public event in the heart of Jerusalem on this special feast day.

In the days before Pentecost, the group of Jerusalem disciples, which included the apostles, numbered about 120 (cf. Acts 1:15). This number is not without symbolic significance, as there were 120 priests involved with the divine dedication of Solomon's temple, when fire fell from heaven and the Glory of Yahweh filled the temple (cf. 2 Chronicles 5:12-14; 7:1-3). And now, in relation to the divine dedication of God's new temple on the day of Pentecost, also accompanied by divine fire from heaven, there were 120 priests of a new order (cf. 1 Peter 2:5).

Even though there is mention of the upper room where the disciples were staying in Acts 1:13, where they gathered together after the Ascension, that was still over a week before Pentecost. When the day of Pentecost came, it would've been their custom to gather at the temple. Acts 2:1-4 describes them gathered together in one place when the sound of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting; and they saw what appeared to be tongues of fire separating, which then came to rest on each of them. This 'house' was evidently referring to the house of God, the temple courts, where they were sitting (cf. John 2:13-17; Acts 2:46). Other Jews heard the sound and a crowd gathered around the disciples, and then eventually Peter and the Eleven stood up to address the crowd (cf. Acts 2:5-15). How could all of this have occurred in an upper room?

³ As a note of interest, it is my belief that the original *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil* in the centre of the Garden of Eden in the Genesis story was represented by a fig tree. This is clearly implied in Genesis 3:7 where we are told that Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together to make coverings for themselves immediately after they had both eaten from this tree. A thoughtful study of figs and fig trees throughout Scripture will show this to be so.

It is also my belief that the original *Tree of Life* is represented in Scripture by an almond tree. The most notable examples are: the budding of Aaron's staff overnight, which became an almond branch producing almonds (Numbers 17); and the exterior appearance of the seven-branched golden candlestick (Menorah), which resembled an almond tree (Exodus 25:31-40; 37:17-22). Both of these are types and symbols of the Messiah Himself.

Be that as it may, in the vision of Revelation, the Tree of Life is described as being on both sides of the River of Life and bearing twelve crops of fruit, one for each month (Revelation 22:2). Whether this visionary symbolism is indicating that the crops are the same 'fruit-kind' or different 'fruit-kinds' is unclear, nevertheless, the tree is literally called the 'wood' (Gk. *xulon*) or 'log of life' implying that this 'tree' was once dead, but now it is living! This, of course, symbolises Christ Jesus Himself. And to eat from this Tree is to have the Life of the ages in the Kingdom of God.

⁴ Even the New Bible Commentary in its notes on Matthew 24 says the following:

"The NIV mg. offers 'race' as an alternative to *generation*. This suggestion is prompted more by embarrassment on the part of those who think v 30 refers to the *parousia* rather than by any natural sense of the word *genea*!" (21st Century Edition, P. 937)

Although I agree with what is said here about the 'natural sense of... *genea*' being that of *generation*, nevertheless, there appears to be a little confusion over the use of *parousia*. The writer clearly believes that the Greek word *parousia* refers to the Second Advent in this discourse, although a little earlier in the commentary text it is admitted that this word doesn't always refer to the Second Coming.

From the comment above it is evident that the writer believes that because the word *parousia* isn't mentioned in verse 30, it then follows that if one thinks that this verse *does* refer to the Second Advent then one is clearly mistaken; and it then becomes an embarrassment because (according to this view) the Parousia didn't happen in 'this generation!' Nevertheless, a few verses earlier, in v 27, the word *parousia* is used of this 'coming' of Christ, which, in the context, is clearly referring to the same 'coming' of verse 30 that was to occur in 'this generation!' (I hope that's clear enough!)

This is a good example of the kind of confusion that arises when commentators try to give the word *parousia* the sole meaning of 'Second Advent' only; after which they then proceed to interpret the Second Advent in accordance with popular (mis)conceptions of it. The ensuing result is that, even by partial-preterist standards, the Olivet Discourse gets contextually broken up, leading to a compartmentalising of the 'coming of Christ' to 'this generation' and the alleged yet-future 'coming of Christ' of 'the Second Advent!' A past Second Appearing, though, in no way denies a future consummation event.

⁵ Here is what Wayne Jackson says in his *Study of Matthew 24*.

"Genea is found forty-three times in the New Testament. In seventeen of these cases, the expression is "this generation." In Matthew's record, for example, "this generation" is found in 11:16; 12:41,42,45; 23:36, and 24:34. A careful

consideration of these passages provides a clear sense of the significance of the expression.

For instance, Jesus, surveying the Jewish wickedness of his day, warned of an impending punishment. He said:

All these things [the consequences of the Jews's rebellion] shall come upon **this generation** (Matthew 23:36).

Why is it millennialists contend that "this generation" in 23:36 is the generation devastated by the Romans in A.D. 70, but allege that "this generation" in 24:34 refers to a far-away "future day" (Barbieri 1983, 75,78)?

Arndt and Gingrich suggest that genea denotes "basically, the sum total of those born at the same time, expanded to include all those living at a given time generation, contemporaries" (1967, 153).

McClintock and Strong state that the phrase "this generation" in Matthew 24:34 denotes "the generation of persons then living contemporary with Christ" (1969, 776)."

<http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/19-a-study-of-matthew-24> - accessed 28/02/2012.