

Part Two - Greek: Genea

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This is the second of five articles to examine the Greek words, since the full Preterist view is consistent with the Scripture, the Greek words in the NT, and the historical records. Most Futurists' views have fallen short in their failure to properly take into account the historical-grammatical-cultural context of the prophecies (specifically what they meant to their first-century audience). One of many problems some futurists have is identifying the correct definition of the word, "generation." They interpret the word, "generation" as it is used today or in the future. The Bible was written for us, but it was not written to us. We will look into the eschatological passages of the Bible with this word "generation." The Bible I am using is the New American Standard Bible.

When you see the phrase "this generation," ask yourself, the question, "which generation?" We can look the word "generation" in Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the NT, and we can see that the Greek word is "genea." It says, "The whole multitude of men living at the same time." Also we find in William F. Arndt and Wilber Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT and Other Early Christian Literature: "basically, the sum total of those born at the same time, expanded to include all those living at a given time. Contemporaries."

I have noticed that many Bible commentators dance around the meaning of the word "generation." Some say that Jesus was speaking to a generation that was not going to exist until thousands of years in the future. Others claim that the whole Jewish "race" was in view. Those are NOT sound Biblical interpretations. The Greek word "genos" rather than "genea" is the best translated "race" as in Acts 7:19; 17:28; Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:5; 1 Peter 2:9. Take a look at the following passages that contain the word "generation," which is the period from 30-70 AD (40 years):

1. Matt. 11:16 (Luke 7:31) - "But what shall I compare this generation?" In previous verses Jesus was talking about John the Baptist, who was Elijah the prophet in Mal. 4:5,6 (see Luke 1:13-17 & Matt. 17:10-13) before the great and terrible day of the Lord in 66- 70 AD. I would recommend you to read some of articles in other links at the end of this article. So, Jesus cannot compare "this" generation of the wicked with any other generation.

2. Matt. 12:39 - "But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craved for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet." Clearly, Jesus was speaking to the Jewish leaders, an evil and adulterous generation that was seeking for a sign. Let us look at the illustration of Jonah which Jesus said applied to Him:

*There was a great storm in which Jonah was caught and he was sleeping. The men on the boat were afraid. Then the sea was calmed supernaturally (Jonah 1:4-16).

*There was a great storm in which Jesus was caught and He was sleeping. The disciples on the boat were afraid. Then the sea was calmed supernaturally (Mark 4:37-39).

*Jonah was in the great fish for 3 days and 3 nights (Jonah 1:17). *Jesus was in the tomb for 3 days and 3 nights (Matt. 12:40).

*God had supernaturally raised Jonah out of the great fish's belly of Sheol (2:2, 10).

*God had supernaturally raised Jesus out of the tomb and Hades "vomited" Him (Acts 2:31).

*Jonah was a sign to Ninevah.

*Jesus was a sign to Jerusalem.

*Jonah preached to the Ninevites that God was going to destroy them in 40 days (Jonah 3:4).

*Jesus (and His apostles) preached to the Jews in Jerusalem that God was going to destroy them in that generation (40 years - Matt. 23:31-38).

*40 days of preaching caused Ninevah to repent. *40 years of preaching did not get Jerusalem to repent!

*God called Ninevah the great city (Jonah 1:2; 3:2; 4:11). *God called Jerusalem the great city (Rev. 11:8; 17:3, 5, 18).

3. Matt. 12:41, 42 - "The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something is greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South shall rise up with this generation at the judgment and shall condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here." Jesus was saying that the men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South would rise up (from the dead) with this generation at the judgement. This is CRITICAL! Obviously, it has occurred in the first century, otherwise Jesus is a false prophet. Case closed and court adjourned.

4. Matt. 12:43-45 - Read these passages and Jesus say, "That is the way it will also be with this evil generation." He was talking about how the demoniac spirits will get worse in the generation to which He was speaking.

5. Matt. 16:4 - "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah." And He left them, and went away." Jesus was repeatedly saying that the Jewish leaders were still seeking after a sign in an evil and adulterous generation.

6. Matt. 17:17 (Mark 9:19 & Luke 9:41) - "And Jesus answered and said, "O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me." Jesus knew many were in the unbelieving and perverted generation He was addressing- a generation with much demoniac activity around them.

7. Matt. 23:36 - "Truly I say to you, all these things shall be upon this generation." Jesus pronounced His "woes" on the Jewish leaders in this chapter (read all of Matt. 23). Jesus ended His indictment of Israel's first century religious leaders with this shocking surprise: "Behold, your house (temple) is being left to you desolate!" (v. 38). The temple was burned and destroyed in 70 AD by the Roman armies.

8. Matt 24:34 (Mark 13:30) - Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place." Clearly, Jesus answered His disciples' questions stating the events in this chapter would come upon their generation. Read some of Jesus' parables that apply to that generation to whom He was speaking (Matt. 21:33-46; 22:1-14 and Luke 19:11-27, 41-44). We should not miss the straightforward manner of which Jesus spoke concerning the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Let me add something about Matt. 24 from Eusebius, the Christian historian from the late third century. He said, "The whole body, however, of the church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a divine revelation, given men of approved piety there before the war, removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan called Pella. Here, those that believed in Christ, having removed from Jerusalem, as if holy men had entirely abandoned the royal city itself, and the whole land of Judea; the divine justice, for their crimes against Christ and his apostles, finally overtook them, totally destroying the whole generation of these evildoers from the earth...these facts, as well as the whole tenor of the war, and each particular of its progress, when finally the abomination of desolation, according to the prophetic declaration, stood in the very temple of God, so celebrated of old, but which now was approaching its total downfall and final destruction by fire; all this, I say any one that wishes may see accurately stated in the history written by Josephus." (Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Ch. 5) (emphasis mine DWH)

9. Mark 8:38-9:1 - "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." He was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power." This is one of clearest and most powerful messages by the mouth of Jesus. We cannot get around this one with the Futurist's views because the Lord was talking to His disciples, and not some absent and future third parties. Bingo! Case closed!

10. Luke 11:29-32 - The same as in Matt. 12:41, 42. Jesus repeatedly said "this generation" seven times in this chapter. How does the Futurists deal with this???

11. Luke 11:50, 51 (Matt. 23:36) - "In order that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation." Jesus was saying from the beginning (from Abel) to that generation (by 70 AD), all of these people shall rise up in the judgment. Read the context in verses 46 to 54 and the other passages from this article.

12. Luke 17:25 - "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation." Read in this context, verses 22-37. All these things Jesus said would be upon His generation but first He must suffer many things and be rejected by the Jewish people.

13. Luke 21:32 (Matt. 24:34 & Mark 13:30) - "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place." As we have already read, Jesus said this in Matt. 24:34 (Mark 13:30) but notice in Luke 21:22 says "because these are the days of VENGEANCE, in ORDER THAT ALL THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN MAY BE FULFILLED." This is a very important passage because it teaches that all things written in Scripture were fulfilled by 70 AD. Also notice in verse 23, "Woe to those who are with child and those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people." Of which land and people was Jesus speaking this context? It was the land of Israel and the Jewish people.

14. Acts 2:40 - "And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!'" Read Acts 2:16-21 in Peter's sermon. He told the Jewish people they were living in the last days (Heb. 1:2) before the great and glorious day of the Lord in their generation. Read Moses' warning for the Jewish people in the future generations in Deut. 28-32.

15. Phil. 2:14-16 - "Do all things without grumbling or disputing; that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse

generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain." Clearly, Paul knew he was in the midst of perverse generation because the day of Christ is at hand.

16. Heb. 3:9-11 - "Where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years. Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said "They always go astray in their hearts; and they did not know My way"; as I swore in My wrath, "They shall not enter MY rest." The writer warned the Jewish Christians not to fall back into Judaism as the Israelites did in the wilderness for 40 years with Moses. He further shows that many did not enter the typical rest (promised land) because of unbelief or apostasy, thereby exhorting the believers to remain faithful lest they fall after the same example of unbelief. That generation was a "wilderness" period for the church (30 to 70 AD). Now we have entered His rest and inherited the kingdom of God, New Jerusalem since 70 AD. Read and study carefully in chapters 3 and 4 of this book.

Lastly, here is a quotation from the Jewish historian, Josephus, which he wrote about the Jewish War in his generation. When the Jews revolted against Rome, he wrote, "It is, therefore, impossible to go distinctly over every instance of these men's iniquity. I shall, therefore, speak my mind here at once briefly, that neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world" (Josephus' War V:X:5 c.f. V:XIII:6; Matt. 24:21; Dan. 12:1) (emphasis mine DWH). What Josephus saw after the destruction of Jerusalem, he wrote, "...and made the whole city run down with blood, to such a degree indeed that the fire of many of the houses was quenched with these men's blood. And truly so it happened, that though the slayers left off at the evening, yet did the fire greatly prevail in the night; and as all was burning, came that eighth day of the month Gorpieus [Elul], upon Jerusalem, a city that had been liable to so many miseries during this siege, that had it always enjoyed as much happiness from its first foundation, it would certainly have been the envy of the world. Nor did it on any other account so much deserve these sore misfortunes, as by producing such a generation of men as were the occasion of this its overthrow" (Josephus' Wars VII.IX.5) (emphasis mine DWH).

Now, I challenge you to determine which of these verses refers to a time of our future. Did you know that the liberal responds about this in the following way: "We know Jesus didn't return in the first century. Therefore, the NT writers were mistaken in their predictions of an imminent return; and since inspired men cannot write mistaken things, they must not have been inspired!" When God communicates time to man, He reasons with His people in a way that man can understand Him. So, if the futurists really want to get to the heart of the issue, they had better deal with the imminency statements. In other words, to say that "this generation, at hand, quickly, or near" meant two thousands years is to put the integrity of the NT at risk.

Since I am Reformed in my soteriology (doctrine of salvation), I have gladly adopted the full or consistent Preterist position of eschatology. I have realized that it is the only Biblical system that truly cries "sola scriptura!" It allows the Scripture to interpret itself and upholds the law of hermeneutics - the grammatical-historical hermeneutic.

Soli Deo Gloria!

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