

Which Generation?

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“So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it (the Second Advent) is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled” (Matt.24:33-34).

“So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it (the Second Advent) is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done” (Mark 13:29-30).

“So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled” (Luke 21:31-32).

The Scriptures above have been interpreted by many to teach that the generation that sees the Jewish people become a nation again would also see the Rapture.

Since Israel became a nation in May 1948, the proponents of this view have struggled with the question, How long is a generation?

Some say 40 years and others 70 years is a Biblical generation but lets get our Biblical interpretation right first before we begin to talk about the length of generations.

The Parable of the Fig Tree

The passages above follow the parable of the fig tree:

“When his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh...”

Fig trees put forth leaves AFTER they put forth FRUIT. That’s why when Jesus came into Jerusalem and He saw a tree with leaves He expected to find fruit on the tree but He found nothing but leaves and He cursed it (Matt.21:19).

The fig tree is a symbol of the nation of Israel (Joel 1:7) and when Jesus came He found no fruits of righteousness but only the leaves of profession. It will not be until the Tribulation that Israel will turn to the Lord and bear the fruits of righteousness. The leaves of profession and testimony will follow.

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Luke does not confine the parable to Israel but adds, “and all the trees” (Luke 21:29) for the Tribulation will see a “great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” that will be saved during the Tribulation. The angel stated: “These are they that came out of (the) great tribulation...” (Rev.7:9,14).

The last-days revival, that some teach, will not occur until after the Rapture when God pours out His Spirit on repentant Israel but Scripture teaches that the Church age will end in apostasy.

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy...” (1Tim.4:1-2).

The generation that sees “these things” will be near, even at the doors, to the coming of the Lord and the kingdom of God which is “immediately **after** the Tribulation of those days” (Matt.24:29).

But the things that will be “seen” are not confined to the conversion of Israel for Matthew states “**ALL** these things” which includes ALL the things **that Jesus had just spoken about**. He therefore indicated that the generation that saw **all the terrible judgments** of the Tribulation would know that the summer of God’s kingdom was nigh. We have not seen the Tribulation judgments described in the Book of the Revelation chapters 6 to 18 therefore we are NOT the generation to which Jesus referred.

Two Returns

There is no Scripture that says the Rapture will occur in the generation that sees Israel becomes a nation and there are **two returns of Israel** to the land prophesied in Scripture.

The first return is described in Ezekiel ch.36 and it occurs while Israel is **in unbelief** because God says: “*THEN will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean...and I will put my Spirit within you...*” (Ezek.36:25- 27). We have witnessed this return since the beginning of the Zionist Movement in 1881 and especially since WWII.

The second return to the land is described in Isa.60:8-10 – **AFTER** Christ returns to reign. Jesus said that as soon as He returns He will gather His elect nation from the “*four winds, from one end of heaven to the other*” (Matt.24:31).

Isaiah 59:20-21 states that the Redeemer must “*come to Zion*” BEFORE the saved nation is brought back to the land and blessed. So this return is **AFTER the Lord returns to reign**. He comes to those “*that turn from transgression in Jacob*”.

The whole portion of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:7-28 is about the 70th week of Daniel – the 7 years of Tribulation immediately BEFORE Christ returns. Jesus said that the generation that sees “*all these things*” will know His coming is “*near, even at the doors*”. Luke’s account indicates they must see “*these things come to pass*” BEFORE the “*kingdom is nigh at hand*”. The Olivet Discourse is addressed to ISRAEL when they are in the Tribulation and has nothing to do with the Rapture except that the sign of missing persons will let Israel know that the Tribulation has arrived.

The sign that one is “*taken*” and the other “*left*” (Matt.24:40-41) is a **global sign** of “*missing persons*” to Israel to let them know when the “*end of the age*” has come. We know that those “*taken*” are the Church age saints at the Rapture because we now have Paul’s Church epistles. It will be this sign of missing persons that will trigger the conversion of 144,000 Jewish men immediately after the Church has been caught away and BEFORE the judgments of the Tribulation begin (Rev.7:1-3).

Dry Bones

The fact that there will be **two returns** of Israel; a partial return in unbelief, and complete return as a redeemed people; is seen in the prophecy of the valley of dry bones (Ezek.37:1-14). Ezekiel saw a valley of scattered dry bones and is told, “*these bones are the whole house of Israel*” (Ezek.37:11).

Ezekiel prophesied three times. The first time the bones come together to become skeletons. When he prophesied the second time the bones were clothed with flesh and sinews but they have no life. Finally, when he prophesied the third time the corpses receive breath and become a living army.

Bones become skeletons: From 1881 to 1948 the scattered Jews began to unite with a view to re-establishing as a nation in Palestine. Bone came to bone. The Jews began to come together to discuss a return to the Land beginning with the first Zionist Congress at Basle in August 1897.

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Skeletons become Corpses: In 1948 the skeleton was clothed with flesh and sinews and became a nation recognized by the United Nations but it had no spiritual life. The Jews still reject their Messiah and King and God has not poured out His Spirit on the nation.

Corpses become a Living Army: After the Rapture of the true believers who make up the Church of Jesus Christ, the nation will be saved at the time of the Russian-led Islamic invasion described in Ezekiel 38/39 and Joel 2. Then *“the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward”* (Ezek.39:22).

The first return in unbelief is therefore partial and **before** the nation turns to Jesus Christ. Ezekiel ch. 36 describes this return to the land in UNBELIEF in Ezek.36: 24-25 . God specifically states that the return is *“not for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name’s sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen”* (Ezek.36:22). Also in Ezek.36:32.

The second return is complete; every Jew on the face of the earth will be saved and will be returned to the Land:

“Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD” (Ezek.39:28-29).

The Palestinian Covenant

The Palestinian covenant promised a return to the land AFTER the nation repents and turns to the LORD.

“And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse... And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice... the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers” (Deut.30:1-5).

Israel’s return and blessing is conditional on their repentance which certainly has not happened and will not occur until the Russian-led Islamic invasion brings them to repentance IN the first half of the 7 years. That is why Antichrist turns against them in the mid-point

of the Tribulation and that is why God protects them in the second half of the Tribulation.

The present return therefore is *“not for your (Israel’s) sakes”* Ezek.36:22,32 but in God’s sovereign will in order to bring Israel to repentance IN THE TRIBULATION when *“all Israel shall be saved”* Rom.11:26; Joel 2:15-32; Zech.3:9-10; Isa.66:7-9; Isa.25:9.

So the suggestion that the generation that saw the nation established in May 1948 is the generation that sees the Rapture has no Biblical basis at all. If it were the case, then we would only need to accurately determine the length of a generation and we would know when the Rapture would occur but Jesus said that not even He knew when He would come until the Father revealed it.

*“But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, **neither the Son, but the Father**”* (Mark 13:32).

The return of Israel to the land in 1948 is a sign that the time of the Tribulation is drawing near for it signals God’s intention to bring them to repentance in the Day of the Lord. The Church must depart before that day.

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess.5:9).

The return in unbelief is therefore a warning that the Rapture is near and no more.