

69: 'This Generation' and Beyond (Luke 21:25-36)

Last week was difficult teaching because it's a different perspective on the Olivet Discourse than many of us have heard.

Let me be clear - I in no way mean to diminish the character nor scholarship of Godly men and women that teach a different view than I hold. Brothers and sisters can disagree without dividing and drawing battle lines. In fact, we SHOULD discuss our differences with gentleness and respect.

First, I believe I communicated much better at the 11am teaching than the 8:30 - so you might consider going back to listen to that one.

Second, I understand last week's teaching left some of you stunned, confused, or intrigued. That's exactly how I felt when I began to explore and compare different viewpoints. In fact, my journey from what I was taught to what I believe now didn't happen in overnight - it was a journey of several years with much study, reading, and scratching my head...and I still don't have it all figured out.

My journey from dispensational, pre-tribulation theology hasn't been easy & it certainly isn't popular...even for my own family.

Jesus was answering the question about when the temple would be destroyed when He said...

Luke 21:22-24 (ESV)

²² for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. ²³ Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and **wrath against this people**. ²⁴ They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and **Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles**, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

With that I challenged you to consider that what Jesus said was **FUTURE for the apostles, but FULFILLED for us** - culminating with the Judgment on Jerusalem - when the city and the temple were destroyed in A.D. 70.

Finally, we jumped forward a few verses to consider what Jesus meant when He said,

Luke 21:32-33 (ESV)

³² Truly, I say to you, **this generation will not pass away until all has taken place**. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Timeline of Events

- **A.D. 33** Olivet Discourse - just before Jesus crucified, buried, resurrected, ascends to heaven - Jesus had warned of destruction of Temple. The apostles ask the question, "When will this happen?" Jesus answers that 1st would come wars, false messiahs, persecution, famine, & strange earthly events - like earthquakes & weird cosmic events
 - **A.D. 33-35** Peter and John imprisoned (Acts 4); Apostles imprisoned and flogged (Acts 5)
 - **A.D. 35** Stephen stoned to death as pre-Christian Paul persecutes followers of Jesus
 - **A.D. 44** James the apostle beheaded (brother of John); Peter imprisoned as Herod intends to kill him too
 - **A.D. 44-48** Famine as mentioned in Acts 11:28 by Agabus
 - **A.D. 40s-60s** False Messiahs
 - **A.D. 62** James - brother of Jesus - murdered in Jerusalem by unbelieving Jews
 - **A.D. 64-65** Peter & Paul killed under Nero's reign
 - **A.D. 67** Jewish War begins against Romans
 - **A.D. 68-69** General Vespasian battles to Jerusalem, Nero dies, Roman Civil Wars erupt and Vespasian leaves for Rome - **Followers of Jesus flee to Pella**
 - **A.D. 70** Jerusalem & Temple besieged & destroyed by Titus (Vespasian's son) after 5 month siege. Animal sacrifices & temple ceremony comes to a screeching halt. Hundreds of thousands of Jews are killed, many thousands are carried off to captivity, and many run for their lives.
- * **All this within 1 Biblical Generation of 40 years...**as Jesus told the apostles...

Luke 21:32 (ESV)

³² Truly, I say to you, **this generation will not pass away until all has taken place**.

'Generation'

- The Greek word translated 'generation' - **genea** - is used **33 times in 27 verses in the Gospels** (13 in Mat; 5 in Mark; 15 in Luke).
- I have provided you with references to all 33 uses in the **YouVersion Notes** and your **teaching note in the bulletin**.

Matthew 1:17, 11:16, 12:39, 12:41-42 12:45, 16:4, 17:17, 23:36, 24:34

Mark 8:12, 8:38, 9:19, 13:30

Luke 1:48, 1:50, 7:31, 9:41, 11:29-32, 11:50-51, 16:8, 17:25, 21:32

Greek Scholars tell us that this word is used in a couple of different ways:

1. **People of the same KIND** - common characteristics including interests or race.
2. **People of the same TIME** - contemporaries living at the same time - how we typically refer to 'generation'¹

* Interestingly, **genea** seems to be used of contemporaries living at the same time in all these cases. You might remember us covering these example in weeks past.

¹ (BDAG) William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 191.

Luke 9:41

Jesus answered, "O **faithless and twisted generation**, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? ...

Luke 11:29-31

When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "**This generation is an evil generation**. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰ For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to **this generation**. ³¹ The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of **this generation** and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. ³² The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with **this generation** and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

Luke 11:50-51 ESV

so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against **this generation**, ⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of **this generation**.

Luke 17:25

But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by **this generation**.

Luke 21:32

Truly, I say to you, **this generation** will not pass away until all has taken place.

Now we continue with the most difficult part of the text - difficult because we must all struggle to interpret what was intended by Jesus to His disciples as recorded by Luke & communicated with his Gentile audience. Keep in mind - we are reading what Jesus said just BEFORE saying "this generation will not pass away until all has taken place."

Luke 21:25-33 (ESV)

²⁵ "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶ people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

²⁹ And he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰ As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. ³¹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

So, here's our dilemma: How are we understand all this? There are at least 3 views I want you to consider:

1. **Future**. meaning ALL these things are going to happen in the future without pausing to appreciate what has previously been fulfilled. In my opinion, this is the LEAST acceptable view and by now it should be clear why I say that. Jesus is answering the question about the destruction of the temple and what would happen during the lives of the apostles and their disciples. To lift the text and transplant it 2000 plus years later is simply BAD INTERPRETATION. Sadly, this is what the 'Left Behind' series seems to do...and it's what I USED to do...and I was wrong.
2. **Near & Far view**. This is NOT my view, but I certainly understand those who interpret this passage in this way. These folks desire to interpret this passage with the original audience in mind - appreciating who Jesus was speaking to and who the text was written to. They would point out that MUCH of what Jesus said DID take place by the time Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70. They see this as a **NEAR FUTURE** of what Jesus told the apostles would happen. But they don't view everything that Jesus said as yet being fulfilled...hence some of this IS **FAR FUTURE**...and I certainly appreciate that...after all, what about THIS?

Luke 21:25-28 (ESV) ²⁵ "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶ people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Those who take this view are left with 2 options:

- 1) **Jesus didn't mean that this would all take place in ONE GENERATION**. Some things did occur, but not all...so some are to be future - OR
- 2) **ALL this HAS to happen within 1 generation**...and since it didn't happen completely by A.D. 70, Jesus was pointing to a FUTURE generation where all these things would occur: wars, persecution of believers beaten in Jewish synagogues, famine, signs in sky, and destruction of a REBUILT TEMPLE where thousands of Jews will die & be carried off as slaves...all before the SECOND COMING of Jesus.

3. **Past. Preterism** - from Latin meaning 'past'. As I studied this view I was surprised to find out that the view I had so long held had no significant mention nor traction until after the 1830s, while this view had carried more weight.

☀️ **Gary DeMar** writes: *a survey of Bible commentators will show that for centuries, prior to the advent of dispensational premillennialism, "this generation" was interpreted as the generation of Jesus' day and not a distant generation. In addition, these same commentators understood that all the events prior to Matthew 24:34 ['this generation'] referred to events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.*²

If we lived before the 1830s, this would have been one of the views we would have likely held. If ALL these things DID occur in the PAST, then many have misunderstood the judgment language used many times before in the OT. I'll show you what I mean.

Luke 21:25-26 (ESV)

²⁵ "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶ people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

- **sun, moon, stars, roaring of sea and waves:** This isn't the first time this language is used in Scripture: **Isaiah 13** destruction of Babylonians by Medo-Persians.

Isaiah 13:9-10 (ESV)

⁹ Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. ¹⁰ For **the stars** of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the **sun** will be dark at its rising, and the **moon** will not shed its light.

Ezekiel 32:7-8 (ESV) * God speaking of destroying Egypt

⁷ When I blot you out, I will **cover the heavens and make their stars dark**; I will **cover the sun with a cloud**, and the **moon shall not give its light**. ⁸ All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you, and put darkness on your land, declares the Lord God.

* Further, Josephus and Tacitus DO write about strange occurrences in the sky and on the earth, which I don't have time to deal with today but will certainly point you to sources that speak of it.

Resources:

- **The Apocalypse Code** by Hank Hanegraaff
- **The Last Days According to Jesus** by Dr. R.C. Sproul
- **The Olivet Discourse Made Easy** by Dr. Ken Gentry
- **Last Days Madness** by Gary DeMar
- **Revelation: Four Views: A Parallel Commentary** edited by Steve Gregg
- **Revelation Made Easy** by Dr. Ken Gentry
- **The Last Days According to Jesus** by R.C. Sproul (videos on YouTube)

Luke 21:27-28 (ESV) And then they will see the **Son of Man coming in a cloud** with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

See how this language is used in the OT.

Isaiah 19:1 (ESV) An oracle concerning Egypt. Behold, **the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and comes to Egypt**; and the idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence, and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.

In this text, Jesus is using the same phrase He used when being judged by the Sanhedrin. Jesus is quoting from **Daniel 7:13-14**.

Mark 14:62 (ESV) And Jesus said, "I am, and **you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.**"

Question: How can He be SEATED and COMING with the clouds? He is **seated** - ENTHRONED, and **coming with the clouds** - bringing judgment on the city that judged Him guilty!

Luke 21:28 (ESV) Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Jewish followers of Jesus who had been persecuted by other Jews - Stephen stoned, James beheaded, apostles thrown in prison & flogged... Yet by destroying Jerusalem along with those who stood against His followers for so long, Jesus has given them redemption - freedom. He has justified their message before their enemies.

Is it POSSIBLE that this is what Jesus meant as He spoke to His apostles? Don't hear what I'm NOT saying. I'm NOT saying Jesus has already returned. That is yet to be fulfilled. What I am saying is Jesus came in judgment against Jerusalem through the Romans.

You might say, wait a second Jackie - What if you're wrong? what if Jesus IS talking about His future return here? Then I will be THRILLED to find that out when He returns...and HE WILL RETURN! Luke opens up with that fact in his sequel of Acts 1!

² DeMar, Gary (2009-10-31). Last Days Madness: The Obsession of the Modern Church (Kindle Locations 1259-1262). American Vision. Kindle Edition.

Luke 21:29-33 (ESV)

²⁹ And he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰ As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. ³¹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

³² Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Just like last week, we find significant application for today at the end of this text. What the apostles heard, and what Luke's audience read...years before the destruction of Jerusalem, was significant for **'THIS GENERATION' AND BEYOND.**

Whether Jesus intends **'this generation'** to be FUTURE, NEAR/FAR, or PAST...there is a challenge for both the 1st century & 21st century disciples.

Luke 21:34-36 (ESV)

³⁴ "But **watch yourselves** lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. ³⁵ For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ But **stay awake** at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to **stand before the Son of Man.**"

BIG TRUTH: Judgment is Coming. Don't be Distracted.

- Some are distracted by being **IRRESPONSIBLE** - dissipation [unrestraint] and drunkenness. Are you living for earthly PLEASURE?
- Others are distracted by being **RESPONSIBLE**, but the **cares of this life** become their focus. Are you living for earthly SECURITY?
- Either one could distract the 1st century disciples...and 21st century disciples.

Again, what is true for the 1st century disciples is true for the 21st century disciples. Jesus was going to judge Jerusalem, and Jesus IS going to judge US one day too.

BIG TRUTH: Judgment is Coming. Don't be Distracted.

- ARE YOU DISTRACTED? Or are you prepared?
- Have you trusted Jesus with your present AND your future...or are you living for PLEASURE & SECURITY?