

# The Fig Tree Has Budded 3

Evidence from Matthew 24 that the Lord Will Return  
In the Span of a Generation from Israel's Birth

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## *What is a Generation?*

We have determined what the fig tree represents and now we must determine what a generation is. “Assuredly, I say to you, this generation [*genea γενεά*] will by no means pass away till all these things take place,” (Matthew 24:34). When considering this question we might do well to remember that Jesus was not speaking Greek to His disciples but Hebrew, which is documented in my book *Discovering the Language of Jesus*. Not only was Jesus speaking Hebrew to the Jews of His day, which most certainly included His disciples, but according to what are known as the fragments of Papias, the book of Matthew was first written in Hebrew and then later translated to Greek.

Papias was one of the early Church Fathers who lived from 70 to 155 AD. The early church historian Eusebius notes that he “had the privilege of association with Polycarp, in the friendship of St. John himself, and of ‘others who had seen the Lord.’” (Eusebius 3.39.15) [...] He says about Matthew (fragment VI) “Matthew put together the oracles [of the Lord] in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as best he could.” (Eusebius, III, 39, 1) (Hamp, 2005 *Discovering the Language of Jesus*).

Given that Jesus was speaking Hebrew, the word that we ought to be truly considering is the Hebrew word *dor* (דֹר), which underlies the Greek word *genea* (γενεά) (the Greek Septuagint translates *dor* as *genea*). *Dor* is defined by Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon as “(1) *an age, generation* of men, as if *the period and circuit* of the years of life.” Brown Driver Briggs defines it primarily as “1. *period, age, generation*, mostly poet.: a. of duration in the past, *former age(s)*” and also as “2. of men living at a particular time (period, age).” Based on my own research where I examined the 79 times that word is used in the Hebrew Bible, the word should be defined as the period of a person's life. In other word, generation is defined **both** as *period of time* and a *group of people* which cannot be separated. The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT) explains the meaning of generation as it relates to the entirety of a person's life:

Occasionally there is a Hebrew word wherein etymology, as a route to discovery of ancient thought patterns, is all-important in discovering the true life-situation in which the word must be understood. Such is the case here. Authorities all agree that *dor*, the noun, is derived from *dur*, the verb. The simple primitive sense, not expressly found in any biblical text, is to move in a circle, surround. [...] In this manner an original meaning of “go in a circle” [...] provide[s] the basis for a word of important theological meaning. [...] By a thoroughly understandable figure, a man's lifetime beginning with the womb of earth and returning thereto (Gen 3:19) is a *dor*, (TWOT *Dor*).

While it is true that a new generation begins with the birth of one's offspring, that still does not negate the fact that the length of a particular generation is the total lifespan. In reality, the Hebrew or Greek word is not that different from their English equivalent. If we talk about my

parents' generation it is the people group born around the similar time as them. I am not in my parents' generation – I am the second generation. In fact, I was born some thirty years into my parents' life. However, we should not define the length of a generation as the interval between the two but rather as the lifetime of a given person. After all, my mother is still alive and many people in her generation are too. Some people in her generation, like my father, have already passed on. However, there will be some that will live into their eighties and even a few into their nineties.

Let's consider the following verses that show that the *people group* of a certain *period of time* all died: “And **Joseph** died, all **his brothers**, and **all that generation**,” (Exodus 1:6 emphasis mine). The verse clearly was not talking about people in Abraham's day or people in Moses' day. It was the people group of a particular time that died – that is a generation. The Psalmist demonstrates a similar usage wherein he is exhorting those living at his time to not be like the generation (time of) their fathers: “And may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation *that* did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God.” (Psalms 78:8). Notice that generation is being used as both a people group (fathers) and also a time period (since fathers necessarily come before their progeny). Therefore, when the psalmist says “a generation that did not set its heart aright” he is talking about a specific group of people who lived at a specific time.

This is reinforced by Deuteronomy 2:14 where Moses discusses the time that was spent in the desert as punishment against the generation that rebelled against the Lord. “And the time we took to come from Kadesh Barnea until we crossed over the Valley of the Zered *was* thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war was consumed from the midst of the camp, just as the LORD had sworn to them,” (Deuteronomy 2:14). The generation was the lifetime (forty years plus twenty) of a group of men as derived from the book of Numbers in which God gives the minimum time of a generation [Hebrew: *dor* דֹּר Greek: *genea* γενεά] as sixty years (twenty and above plus wandering forty years):

Surely none of the men who came up from Egypt, from **twenty** years old and above, shall see the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they have not wholly followed Me... So the LORD's anger was aroused against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness **forty** years, until all the **generation** [LXX reads: *genea* γενεά] that had done evil in the sight of the LORD was gone, (Numbers 32:11, 13).

Thus the minimum age of a generation is sixty years (forty years is never a generation in Scripture contrary to what many have claimed). However, there is another verse that provides a more average lifespan of a human being which is also the key to see approximately when the Lord will return for the second time, (a fact pointed out to me by Dr. Kenton Beshore, Sr.).

The days of our lives are seventy years; *And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away,* (Psalms 90:10).

The fullness of a generation being seventy or eighty years is striking when one considers that Moses, the author of this Psalm, lived to be one hundred twenty years old. Bible commentator Thomas Constable points out:

It is interesting that he said the normal human life span was 70 years. He lived to be 120, Aaron was 123 when he died, and Joshua died at 110. Their long lives testify to God's faithfulness in providing long lives to the godly as He promised under the Mosaic Covenant, (Constable, Psalm 90)

It would seem that the Holy Spirit guided Moses to write of what a typical lifetime is, versus his (and other ancients') lifetime.<sup>1111</sup> We find further biblical evidence that a generation is a lifetime which is equivalent to seventy (or eighty) years in Isaiah 23:15 which correlates: "seventy years like the days of one king."

### **Modern Research Confirms Psalm 90:10**

According to the CIA World Fact Book<sup>1111</sup> the longest average life expectancy (by country) for 2009 was 84.36 years in the country of Macau. The Swiss had the 10<sup>th</sup> longest life expectancy of 80.85. Israelis ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in the world and on average lived to be 80.73 years old, Americans ranked 49<sup>th</sup> with an expectancy of 78.11 years and Guatemalans ranked 143<sup>rd</sup> with an expectancy of 70.29. People in only 38 countries (out of 224) live less than 60 years on average.

Psalm 90:10 therefore provides a very realistic picture of how long a generation is. The vast majority of people (by nationality) on the planet live until they are sixty (185/224 or 82.5%). Fewer, though a majority still, live into their seventies (144/224 or 64.2%). However, only a fraction live on average into their eighties (22/224 or 9.8%).

Matthew provides our last clue in the beginning of his Gospel when discussing the number of generations from Abraham until Christ thereby demonstrating that generation (*genea γενεά* – the same word used in Matthew 24:34) signifies the lifetime of a person:

So all the **generations** [*genea γενεά*] from Abraham to David are fourteen **generations** [*genea γενεά*], from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen **generations** [*genea γενεά*], and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen **generations** [*genea γενεά*], (Matthew 1:17).

Here we see that a generation was the lifetime of a person and not the specific amount of years though we have learned that the duration of a generation is anywhere from sixty years to eighty. We need to understand that generations overlap one another. When a father and mother have children a new generation is born, but so long as all the people born around their birthdates are living, their generation has not passed away. Think of it this way: the Baby Boomer generation (born between 1946 and 1964) has not yet passed away. In fact, the oldest members would just now be reaching their mid-60's. Certainly some of its members have passed away already, but the majority can expect to make it well into their 70's and some into their 80's. In the same way, the generation spoken of by Jesus will not pass away until all the things he mentioned take place. The following diagram depicts how generations overlap one another. The 1<sup>st</sup> generation could be likened to the Baby Boomer generation. Generation X (2<sup>nd</sup> Generation) was born toward the beginning of a Baby Boomers life (generation) but they are not of the Baby Boomer generation. Considering all the evidence we explored, I'd like to propose that the Baby Boomer generation is the generation that will not pass away until the Lord comes back.

## ***Which Generation?***

So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near – at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this **generation** will by no means pass away till all these things take place, (Matthew 24:33-34).

The generation spoken of here must be the generation that would see all of the things that Jesus spoke of when the disciples questioned Him and specifically it would be the generation that would see the “fig tree budding”. Since we have seen that the fig tree was Israel in both the prophets and according to Jesus, then “this generation” must be the one that began at the commencement of the new state of Israel.<sup>[iiii]</sup>

## ***The Fig Tree Has Budded***

Thus we see Israel was a dried tree for about 1900 years and then miraculously the branch put forth leaves in one day on May 14, 1948. Jesus told us that when this happens His return is at the doors. He said that the generation that saw this would by no means pass away. A generation is the lifetime of a person and that is on average between seventy or eighty years. Thus, according to the above considerations we could write out our equation in the following manner:

1948 + 70 ≈ 2018 – Jesus’ return after the tribulation must occur sometime after 2018.

**OR** if by reason of strength

1948 + 80 ≈ 2028 – Jesus’ return after the tribulation period must occur by the year 2028.

The parable of the fig tree was the answer to the disciples’ original question at the beginning of the chapter:

As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?” (Matthew 24: 3).

The observant student of the Word has noted that this reference to when the end of the age will be is in seeming contradiction to Jesus’ own words in Acts 1:6-8.

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth,’ (Acts 1:6-8).

This apparent contradiction is resolved however, when we consider just who Jesus was talking to – the disciples that He was speaking to in Acts were the same men who, only some forty days earlier, He had told what to look for at the end of the age. And the sign that He told them would definitively mark the beginning of the generation that would see the end was nothing less than the fig tree putting forth its branch and becoming tender. **Thus, the solution is the fig tree.** They asked a question which he had already answered for them – look for the revival of the fig tree (which Jesus had pronounced cursed). In other words, there was no point in looking for the end of the age so long as Israel was a dried tree! There was no point in looking

for the second coming so long as the fig tree remained cursed (that is: not a nation). Only when it would become tender could the restoration of the kingdom occur. That is why Jesus told the disciples of what they would receive in the meantime (“but you shall receive power”) and what their task was to be (“and you shall be witnesses to Me”) until the revival of the fig tree and ultimately His coming. Therefore, until the fig tree (Israel) was revived, there would be no restoration of the kingdom to Israel – which is of course only logical: Israel cannot have the kingdom if they do not exist as a national entity (a dried tree). But within a generation (lifetime of a person) of the revival of the fig tree (Israel) the kingdom will be restored in the millennial/messianic era.

### ***Occupy Until He Comes***

We have seen that the biblical interpretation of the fig tree is clearly Israel. We have also seen that a generation is the lifetime of a person which according to Psalm 90:10 is generally 70 or 80 years. Whether or not the Lord is required to return within 80 years exactly we obviously cannot be dogmatic. Nevertheless, in light of the incredible accuracy of His first coming, we ought to be persuaded that the above dates are both reasonable and likely. The Lord’s second coming, therefore, **appears** to be between 2018 – 2028.<sup>[iiv]</sup> The beginning of the Great Tribulation (subtract seven years) then would **most likely** commence between 2011 – 2021.<sup>[iiv]</sup> Remember we are to know the times and the seasons yet Jesus said very literally that the **day** and the **hour** no one can know. The Lord’s second coming between 2018 and 2028 is seemingly the time and the season, but is **not** predictive of the day or the hour. In light of the events that are happening in numerous categories (economics, natural disasters, etc.) on a global scale, the Lord’s return within the 80 years from the reestablishment of Israel in 1948 appears almost certain. Nevertheless, no matter when the Lord returns, occupy until He does and tell others the good news of the gospel. Heed Jesus’ warning:

**“Constantly be on your guard so that your hearts may not be loaded down with self-indulgence, drunkenness, and the worries of this life, or that day will take you by surprise like a trap. For it will come on all who live on the face of the earth. So be alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place and to take your stand in the presence of the Son of Man.”**  
**(Luke 21:34-36 ISV).**

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<sup>[ii]</sup> If we understand from Genesis 15 that Abraham’s descendants will be afflicted for four hundred years and that they would come back in the fourth generation, then the maximum lifespan would appear to be 100 years – which again demonstrates that generation is the lifespan of an individual.

<sup>[iii]</sup> Retrieved May 3, 2010 from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2102rank.html>.

<sup>[iiii]</sup> A speech given by Benjamin Netanyahu May 16, 2010 at Ammunition Hill in honor of Jerusalem Day confirms that he is of the generation that saw the rebirth of Jerusalem. Netanyahu was born in 1949 which makes him just one year younger than the nation itself. “We are the generation which was lucky enough to see our holy sites liberated and returned to our hands, and it is upon us to transfer this right to our children.” Retrieved May 20, 2010 from: <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Article.aspx?id=175392>.

<sup>[iiv]</sup> Thanks to my friend Dr. Beshore for his valuable insights into these dates via personal communication.

<sup>[iv]</sup> These dates seem to be confirmed extra-biblically by virtue of several discoveries: a massive Coronal Mass Ejection from the sun is expected between 2012-2014; there will be a series of four total lunar eclipses (tetrad) between 2014-2015 all of which fall on biblical feast days (as discovered by Mark Biltz) which potentially spells

trouble for Israel; the all seeing eye on the back of the dollar bill (as discovered by Tom Horn) points to the coming of the antichrist between 2012 and 2016; both the Mayan and Aztec calendars have ending dates of 2012.