The Fig Tree Has Budded
Evidence from Matthew 24 That the Lord Will Return in the Span of a Generation from Israel's Birth
(Prepublication copy)
Appendix to the upcoming book Corrupting the Image by
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Contents
Introduction.......................................................................................................................... 2
Knowing the Times and Seasons ...................................................................................... 3
Birth Contractions.............................................................................................................. 3
The Fig Tree is the Sign of His Coming ............................................................................. 3
  The Fig Tree Is Israel ....................................................................................................... 3
The Cursed Tree............................................................................................................... 5
  Early Christian Commentary Confirms Israel is the Fig Tree ........................................ 7
All the Trees ................................................................................................................... 8
  Lebanon .......................................................................................................................... 10
  Jordan ............................................................................................................................ 10
  Syria .............................................................................................................................. 10
What is a Generation? ...................................................................................................... 11
  Modern Research Confirms Psalm 90:10 ...................................................................... 14
Which Generation? .......................................................................................................... 15
The Fig Tree Has Budded ............................................................................................... 15
  Occupy Until He Comes ............................................................................................... 16
Introduction

As a boy I remember feeling the rush of the wind strike my face, the sky grow dark as ominous clouds rolled in and covered the sun. Then the sounds of the thunder could be heard in the distance and the sky flashed. It was a time of great anticipation and excitement. Even though the storm was several miles away, it was clear to all that it was coming. The end times can be likened a great deal to a coming storm. We can see the storm coming and feel its effect even though it has not yet arrived fully. So it is with the Lord’s return, the signs are evident even though the event itself has not yet arrived.

Concerning the time of the Lord’s return, Jesus’ disciples asked him: “what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?” (Matthew 24:3b ESV). Jesus then began to describe the many things that would precede His second coming – many of which are being fulfilled before our eyes. Jesus said “For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many,” (Matt 24:5). Since 1900 there have been many dozens who have either claimed to be Jesus or the Christ in one form or another. Some of the most notable are Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church and David Koresh of the Branch Davidian religious sect, Ariffin Mohamed from Malaysia and Sergei Torop from Russia.

He then spoke of wars, rumors of war and nation against nation.

And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows, (Matthew 24:6-8).

Only in the twentieth century have we seen the entire world at war not just once but twice. The projected death toll for the Second World War alone is upwards of fifty million people – a number unheard of before in human history. The past century could easily be classified as wars, rumors of wars, nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom.

There are many signs of the Lord’s second coming just as there were for his first coming and the Lord rebuked the leaders of his day for not picking up on the revealed signs that were evident of his first coming.

When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, ‘A shower is coming.’ And so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat,’ and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time? (Luke 12:54-56, emphasis mine).
Just as the signs of the coming storm were obvious to me as a boy, so should those leaders have known that their Messiah was coming. Jesus noted that they could easily and successfully forecast the weather by simply looking at the sky yet failed to see (or at least to accept) the Messiah in front of them. We too see the last days’ signs that Jesus spoke about are either happening or about to happen in our day.

**Knowing the Times and Seasons**

Paul, in his letter to the Thessalonians wrote that believers could and should know the times and seasons of the Lord’s (second) coming since they were not in the darkness like others.

> Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. **But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.** For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness,” (I Thessalonians 5:1-5, emphasis mine).

**Birth Contractions**

Jesus likened all of the events mentioned above to birth pains by saying: “All these are but the beginning of the birth pains,” (Matthew 24:8). Just like for a woman in labor, the contractions will get closer and closer until finally the child is born, so it is if we were to consider today’s events in terms of giving birth, we might say that prophetically all that is left is to push the baby out. All that the Lord had said so far (discussed above) was a response to the disciples’ question “what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

**The Fig Tree is the Sign of His Coming**

Jesus then gave an important sign to look for concerning his coming: the fig tree. The sign of his coming and the end of the age is the fig tree:

> Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. 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 24:32-34, emphasis mine).

**The Fig Tree Is Israel**

There are two obvious questions concerning this parable: who or what is the fig tree and how long is a generation? The answer to the first question is unmistakably Israel. God clearly compares Israel with a fig tree. The following verses are given in chronological order.
I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season, (Hosea 9:10, emphasis mine).

Here God compares Israel to grapes and the fathers to fruits of the fig tree. Then in Joel He speaks of “my land” as being comparable to “my fig tree” again showing that Israel (both ethnically/nationally and geographically) is symbolized as a fig tree.

For a nation has come up against My land, strong, and without number; His teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he has the fangs of a fierce lion. He has laid waste My vine, And ruined My fig tree; He has stripped it bare and thrown it away; Its branches are made white, (Joel 1:6-7, emphasis mine).

Next God shows Jeremiah a vision of baskets of good figs and bad figs. Note that both the good and the bad are representative of Israel (Judah). The “good” are taken out of the land, that is, out of danger, and the “bad” are left to be judged.¹

One basket had very good figs, like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket had very bad figs which could not be eaten, they were so bad. Then the LORD said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And I said, "Figs, the good figs, very good; and the bad, very bad, which cannot be eaten, they are so bad." "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: "Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge those who are carried away captive from Judah, whom I have sent out of this place for their own good, into the land of the Chaldeans. "And as the bad figs which cannot be eaten, they are so bad"--surely thus says the LORD--"so will I give up Zedekiah the king of Judah, his princes, the residue of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who dwell in the land of Egypt, (Jer 24:2, 3, 5, 8 emphasis mine).

Jesus continues the correlation of Israel with a fig tree during the final stage of His ministry. Keep in mind that Jesus had been ministering in Israel for about three years when He gave this parable. Just like the illustration of God seeking good fruit from His vineyard and finding none in Isaiah 5:1-7, so too Jesus, had come in person expecting to find some good fruit and found little or none.

He also spoke this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’ But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down,’ (Luke 13:6-9, emphasis mine).

¹ This is analogous to the rapture in that the “good” are taken out of the land and the “bad” are left to be judged.
That Jesus had Israel in mind is confirmed at the end of the chapter when Jesus laments over Jerusalem because of their unwillingness to receive their Messiah and declares that their house is left desolate. Furthermore, the Jewish leaders of Jerusalem could in no way say “blessed is He…” so long as they were not living in the land of Israel (during the time of their exile).

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ (Luke 13:34-35).

The Cursed Tree

Jewish men were to present themselves before the Lord three times a year. Jesus came up to Jerusalem via Jericho on a number of occasions during the three plus years of His ministry in order to celebrate the feasts. There was a fig tree by the road (Matt 21:19) that He invariably must have seen on a number of occasions as He went up to Jerusalem. The day of the triumphal entry, when He came up from Jericho on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus must have seen the tree noting that there was not any fruit on it – just as the land owner in the parable found none. Coming into Jerusalem, He was hailed as the Messiah by the masses. He then drove out the money changers from the temple foreshadowing his coming pronouncement that Israel, like the fig tree, was barren. In the evening He set out for Bethany to spend the night with His friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus (Bethany was on the same road which came up from Jericho). Returning to Jerusalem in the morning, Jesus passed by the fig tree, noted that there was no fruit on it when there should have been at least some early fruit. Seeing that the tree was unfruitful, He then cursed it.

And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, "Let no fruit grow on you ever again." Immediately the fig tree withered away. (Matt 21:19)

Thus, just like His parable of the fig tree, He had come looking for fruit from the Jewish leadership for over three years finding none. They were like the barren fig tree with no fruit was to be found and so He then pronounced judgment on the worthless tree causing it to die immediately which symbolized the nation. With all of that as our backdrop, we then come to the time markers that He gave us during the Olivet discourse, this time reading Luke’s account:

Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near, (Luke 21:29- 30).

When Jesus commanded them to learn a parable from the fig tree, they must have had swirling in their minds the recent events of the parable and the cursed fig tree. The Hebrew Bible (OT)
background makes it clear that Jesus is likening Israel to the fig tree and just as the fig tree withered, so too would Israel soon be destroyed by the Romans.

Israel was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD and then again in 135 AD. After the second Jewish revolt they were warned not to return to Jerusalem upon the pain of death. They were then dispersed to the four corners of the earth – without a home land for nearly 1900 years. Furthermore, the curse appears to apply to the land itself as well. Rabbi Menachem Kohen of Brooklyn discovered that the land of Israel “suffered an unprecedented, severe and inexplicable (by anything other than supernatural explanations) drought that lasted from the first century until the 20th – a period of 1,800 years coinciding with the forced dispersion of the Jews.”

Journalist Joseph Farah, prompted by the research of Rabbi Kohen, later discovered that only after the Jews returned did the rain begin to come:

For 1,800 years, it hardly ever rained in Israel. This was the barren land discovered by Mark Twain. So-called "Palestine" was a wasteland – nobody lived there. There was no indigenous Arab population to speak of. It only came after the Jews came back. Beginning in A.D. 70 and lasting until the early 1900s – about 660,000 days – no rain.

I decided to check this out as best I could and examined the rainfall data for 150 years in Israel beginning in the early 1800s and leading up to the 1960s. What I found was astonishing – increasing rainfall almost every single year – with the heaviest rainfall coming in and around 1948 and 1967.

Then after those many years and just as Isaiah had foretold, Israel was born in one day:

Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, She gave birth to her children, (Isaiah 66:8).

On May 14, 1948 Israel (the fig tree) declared independence and then was ratified as a nation by edict of the United Nations and literally was born in one day. 1948 becomes the year by which a generation can be measured against.

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3 Ibid.

4 Could the earth be a representation of the UN?

5 An interesting circumstantial confirmation of the 1948 date is found concerning the birth of Abraham. According to biblical chronology (reading from the Massoretic text) he was born 1,948 years after creation (Anno Mundi). While that calculation is based on the year of creation and not the Gregorian calendar, the same number is striking. Furthermore, the date of Abraham receiving the covenant in Genesis 15 was given 2,018 years anno mundi. Given that the birth of Abraham, the father of the nation, and the rebirth of the nation both occurred in the same year (on their respective calendars), is it possible that AD 2,018 (on the Gregorian calendar) will also be significant?
Early Christian Commentary Confirms Israel is the Fig Tree

Getting a “second opinion” is always advisable when there is a lot riding on a decision or when contemplating a new perspective. Thus investigating what early Christians thought about the fig tree parable would seem prudent. An early Christian writing, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, clearly identifies the fig tree as Israel and the time of its budding as the time of the end.\(^6\) While we do not consider extra-biblical sources to be Scripture, they can occasionally serve as a type of commentary from early Christians. Scholars generally accept a date of composition\(^7\) around A.D. 135. This is a significant date because the early Christians had seen Israel destroyed once in AD 70 under Titus who destroyed the Temple, killed upwards of a million Jews and took the rest as slaves. However, not all of the Jews were taken away and those that remained made a comeback.

Caesar Hadrian visited the city in AD 130 and had intimated that he might rebuild the city as a gift to the Jews. When he changed his mind and also outlawed circumcision, the Jews found themselves once again in a deadly conflict with the Romans a mere 62 years after the destruction of the temple. The Jews rallied behind a man named Simon Bar Koseba. Rabbi Akiva would later declare him to be the messiah at which point the Christians who had been helping in the battle left the non-believing Jews to fight for themselves. Hadrian squashed the rebellion in AD 135. He was so angry that he changed the name of the land from Judea to Syria Palestina and salted the land so that nothing would grow. Jerusalem was renamed Aelia Capitolina and a temple to Zeus would eventually be built on the ruins of the Temple mount. Hadrian also banished all Jews from the city on pain of death. With this in mind, to find a text that declares that Israel, which had been utterly decimated, would one day flourish again is truly incredible.

This text, which again, we are treating like a commentary on the Scripture (and not equal to Scripture), clearly states that when the fig tree has budded, the end of the world would come. The text has interpreted Jesus’ parable of the fig tree to be speaking of Israel. When Israel comes back as a nation, then the last days would come:

(learn a parable) from the fig-tree: so soon as the shoot thereof is come forth and the twigs grown, the end of the world shall come. [...] Hast thou not understood that the fig-tree is the house of Israel? [...] when the twigs thereof have sprouted forth in the last days, then shall feigned Christs come and awake expectation saying: I am the Christ, that am now come into the world. [...] But this deceiver is not the Christ. And when they [Israel] reject him [the deceiver] he

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\(^6\) My study of the Scriptures was not influenced by the *Apocalypse of Peter* – I in fact found it after I had written most of the chapter.

\(^7\) Retrieved July 15, 2010 from: [http://www.ntcanon.org/Apocalypse_of_Peter.shtml](http://www.ntcanon.org/Apocalypse_of_Peter.shtml). The authorship of the work is uncertain though some suggest that it was Clement, Peter’s disciple since he is mentioned in the work itself.
shall slay with the sword, and there shall be many martyrs. Then **shall the twigs of the fig-tree, that is, the house of Israel, shoot forth:** [...] Enoch and Elias shall be sent to teach them that this is the deceiver which must come into the world and do signs and wonders to deceive.\(^8\)

The correlation of the fig tree being Israel in the text is unequivocal. According to this text, Israel, likened to a fig tree, was cut down (twice in fact) and exiled (in agreement with the parable of the land owner in Luke 13:6-9). Thus the author clearly saw Israel removed from her land and the people no more. But the author firmly believed that they would come back as a nation: “when the twigs thereof have sprouted forth in the last days” and then the end will come in the days of their sprouting. Notice also that the two witnesses (Enoch and Elias) will come back in the days of their shooting forth and be killed by the false Christ (Antichrist). This text certainly proves that some in the ancient church interpreted the end times in a very literal fashion. However, it also demonstrates that Israel was considered to be the fig tree and that the shooting forth of its branches would happen in the time of the end and more specifically, at the time of the Lord’s coming. Thus we have ancient testimony that Jesus’ mention of the fig tree was a reference to Israel. Her putting forth branches and becoming tender was a reference to her rebirth in the last days which would also be the time of the two witnesses and the Antichrist.

**All the Trees**

We have seen that the fig tree represents Israel in the parable that Jesus told His disciples. No less than three prophets clearly used the fig tree as a representation of Israel. Jesus also did so in the parable of the land owner and the fig tree, He then cursed a fig tree and told the parable of the fig tree concerning the last days. However, when we read in Luke’s Gospel that Jesus also mentioned “all the trees” – just what are we to make of this? Jesus said to learn the parable of the fig tree and all the trees. We learned what is the Scriptural meaning of the fig tree, but what do “all the trees” represent? Sometimes when Jesus would tell a parable He would then give its interpretation. For example in Matthew 13:18, Jesus interpreted the meaning of the parable of the sower in which each ground represented a type of person and their particular spiritual condition. So it is with our parable and for the answer, we need to go to God’s Word.

Since the fig tree represents Israel as a nation, then we should expect that “all the trees” would represent nations as well. Looking in the pages of God’s Word we find this to indeed be the case. In fact, we find that trees are often used to represent people and especially nations in at least eight passages of the Tanakh (Old Testament) alone. We first encounter a parable of trees in Judges 9:7-16 where Jotham, a son of Gideon, addresses the men of Shechem who had just killed seventy of his brothers in order to follow his other brother Abimelech.

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The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them. And they said to the olive tree, ‘Reign over us!’ But the olive tree said to them, ‘Should I cease giving my oil, With which they honor God and men, And go to sway over trees?’ “Then the trees said to the fig tree, ‘You come [and] reign over us!’ But the fig tree said to them, ‘Should I cease my sweetness and my good fruit, And go to sway over trees?’ “Then the trees said to the vine, ‘You come [and] reign over us!’ But the vine said to them, ‘Should I cease my new wine, Which cheers both God and men, And go to sway over trees?’ “Then all the trees said to the bramble, ‘You come [and] reign over us!’ And the bramble said to the trees, ‘If in truth you anoint me as king over you, [Then] come [and] take shelter in my shade; But if not, let fire come out of the bramble And devour the cedars of Lebanon!’ Now therefore, if you have acted in truth and sincerity in making Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done to him as he deserves, (Judges 9:8-16).

In Isaiah 10:33 God refers to chopping off “the tops of trees” as to those who are arrogant and will be “hewn down”. Similar imagery is used in the book of Ezekiel. God in Ezekiel 15:2-6 likens the wood of the vine to the inhabitants of Jerusalem which will be burned in the fire because they are useless (that is idolatrous). God uses the tree motif to speak of Judah being taken into captivity in chapter 17 as well. “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘A great eagle with large wings and long pinions, Full of feathers of various colors, Came to Lebanon And took from the cedar the highest branch. He cropped off its topmost young twig And carried it to a land of trade; He set it in a city of merchants,’” (Ezekiel 17:3-4). In 606/5 BC Nebuchadnezzar took some of the leadership of Judah into captivity – thus Judah is likened to the cedar of Lebanon and the highest branch represents the leadership, which probably included Daniel. We know this to be the case because God gives the interpretation “Say now to the rebellious house: ‘Do you not know what these things mean?’ Tell them, ‘Indeed the king of Babylon went to Jerusalem and took its king and princes, and led them with him to Babylon,’” (Ezekiel 17:12).

God later in the chapter tells what He is going to do with the highest branches in contrast to what King Nebuchadnezzar had done. Whereas King Nebuchadnezzar made it a “spreading vine of low stature” (Ezekiel 17:6) God would set up a king and a kingdom that would be great among the nations. “On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it; and it will bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a majestic cedar. Under it will dwell birds of every sort; in the shadow of its branches they will dwell.” (Ezekiel 17:23). God then makes reference to all the trees of the field, which represent the nations. Whether all the trees represent all the nations of the world or just the nations of the area is not clear. “And all the trees of the field shall know that I, the LORD, have brought down the high tree and exalted the low tree, dried up the green tree and made the dry tree flourish; I, the LORD, have spoken and have done it,” (Ezekiel 17:24).

Ezekiel 20:46-48 contains another example of nations represented as trees. However, perhaps the most telling of all is Ezekiel 31:3-15. There Assyria is likened to a cedar of Lebanon that was greater than all the other trees (which is to say nations). “Therefore its height was exalted above
all the trees of the field [...] and in its shadow all great nations made their home,” (Ezekiel 31:5, 6). God describes how Assyria, the cedar of Lebanon was greater than other kinds of trees though God would send another to cut it down.

‘The cedars in the garden of God could not hide it; the fir trees were not like its boughs, And the chestnut trees were not like its branches; No tree in the garden of God was like it in beauty. I made it beautiful with a multitude of branches, So that all the trees of Eden envied it, That were in the garden of God’. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Because you have increased in height, and it set its top among the thick boughs, and its heart was lifted up in its height, therefore I will deliver it into the hand of the mighty one of the nations, and he shall surely deal with it; I have driven it out for its wickedness,’ (Ezekiel 31:8-11).

Daniel 4:10-11 and Zechariah 11:2 also offer more examples of rulers and nations represented as trees. With the background of the Old Testament, we can now turn back to the New Testament and find Jesus’ use of seed (Matthew 13:6, 40), vine branches (John 15:6) and trees (Luke 3:9; 21:29) to represent people or nations not surprising but very much in keeping with the Scriptures. Therefore, let’s look again at Luke 21:29 “Then He spoke to them a parable: ‘Look at the fig tree, and all the trees.’” The fig tree is Israel and therefore all the trees are other nations. The question then becomes which nations was He referring to?

The answer comes from the comparison with the fig tree; it was dried and then sprouted again. Israel was dried for many years and then came back to be a nation. It would appear therefore that Jesus was referring to other nations close to Israel which would also be reborn. What is astounding to discover is that all of the countries that border Israel came back to be independent nation states around the same time as Israel. The CIA World Fact Book discusses how Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Egypt gained their independence all between the years 1943 and 1952 – all within five years of the birth of Israel.

**Lebanon**
Following World War I, France acquired a mandate over the northern portion of the former Ottoman Empire province of Syria. The French separated out the region of Lebanon in 1920, and granted this area independence in 1943.

**Jordan**
Following World War I and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the UK received a mandate to govern much of the Middle East. Britain separated out a semi-autonomous region of Transjordan from Palestine in the early 1920s, and the area gained its independence in 1946; it adopted the name of Jordan in 1950.

**Syria**
Following World War I, France acquired a mandate over the northern portion of the former Ottoman Empire province of Syria. The French administered the area as Syria until granting it independence in 1946.

**Egypt**

Following the completion of the Suez Canal in 1869, Egypt became an important world transportation hub, but also fell heavily into debt. Ostensibly to protect its investments, Britain seized control of Egypt’s government in 1882, but nominal allegiance to the Ottoman Empire continued until 1914. Partially independent from the UK in 1922, Egypt acquired full sovereignty with the overthrow of the British-backed monarchy in 1952, (CIA World Fact Book, emphases mine).\(^9\)

These countries, like Israel, did not exist as independent countries until 1943 and after. They were simply parts of the Ottoman Empire and then parts of the British Empire or a colony of the French. Their birth around the birth of Israel strengthens the significance of 1948.

**What is a Generation?**

We have determined what the fig tree represents and now what we must determine is just what is a generation. “Assuredly, I say to you, this generation \[\text{genea γενεά} \] will by no means pass away till all these things take place,” (Matthew 24:34). When considering this question we might first of all 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* (דֹּר), 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

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“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: וּדָרֵעַ Greek: γενεὰ γενεᾶ] 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: γενεὰ γενεᾶ] that had done evil in the sight of the LORD was gone, (Numbers 32:11, 13 emphasis mine).

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 70 or 80 years is striking when one considers that Moses, the author of this Psalm, lived to be 120 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. We find further biblical evidence that a generation is a lifetime which is equivalent to 70 (or 80) years in Isaiah 23:15 which correlates: “seventy years like the days of one king.”

[10] 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.
Modern Research Confirms Psalm 90:10

According to the CIA World Fact Book\(^{11}\) the longest average life expectancy (by country) for 2009 was 84.36 years in the country of Macau. The Swiss had the 10\(^{th}\) longest life expectancy of 80.85. Israelis ranked 12\(^{th}\) in the world and on average lived to be 80.73 years old, Americans ranked 49\(^{th}\) with an expectancy of 78.11 years and Guatemalans ranked 143\(^{rd}\) 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 (\(\text{genea}\ \gamma\varepsilon\varepsilon\varepsilon\alpha\\)) – the same word used in Matthew 24:34) signifies the lifetime of a person:

So all the generations \(\text{genea}\ \gamma\varepsilon\varepsilon\varepsilon\alpha\\) from Abraham to David are fourteen generations \(\text{genea}\ \gamma\varepsilon\varepsilon\varepsilon\alpha\\), from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations \(\text{genea}\ \gamma\varepsilon\varepsilon\varepsilon\alpha\\), and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations \(\text{genea}\ \gamma\varepsilon\varepsilon\varepsilon\alpha\\), (Matthew 1:17, emphasis mine).

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\(^{st}\) generation could be likened to the Baby Boomer generation. Generation X (2\(^{nd}\) 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.

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**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, emphasis mine).

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.\(^{12}\)

**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:

\[
1948 + 70 \approx 2018 \\
\text{OR if by reason of strength} \\
1948 + 80 \approx 2028
\]

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

\(^{12}\) 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 is 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
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 – 2028.13 The beginning of the Great Tribulation

13 Thanks to my good friend Dr. Beshore for his valuable insights into these dates via personal communication.

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(subtract seven years) then would most likely commence between 2011 – 2021. 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.”  


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) point to the coming of the antichrist between 2012 and 2016; both the Mayan and Aztec calendars have ending dates of 2012.