

Dee Dee Warren's Positive Case for Orthodox Preterism

This introduction is going to be as *basic* as possible in order to lay the proper groundwork for any reader unfamiliar with this view. So what is Preterism¹? Well in theologese, it is the eschatological system that holds that **most (not all)** of the prophetic passages in the Bible are past (i.e. *preter* is Latin for *past*). Practically what does this mean in a way that the average layperson can get a handle on it? In a nutshell (pun intended) – I believe that the Great Tribulation is over. Done. *Finito*. Now, here is the question that most Christians will be asking at this point: *Just how in the world did I get such an asinine idea?*

Let me say first that I used to be a very staunch and zealous dispensational futurist defender and was very happy in that role. Prophecy seemed to be coming alive before my eyes, and it was frankly very exciting to believe that we were living in the last days and could realistically expect Jesus to return any day to take us up into the sky. My transition to my present belief was not an easy one to make and involved a short journey into outright apostasy. However, I now believe the Bible more than I ever have, and the comfort I have in not having to explain away passages that seem quite obvious to the skeptical is a joy. So that everyone is clear as we move on, the position I am advocating teaches that **Matthew 24, Luke 21, Mark 13** and most of **Revelation** are speaking of first century events, more specifically culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70. In presenting this positive case I will focus on three basic planks of the preterist system: **timing, chronology, and apocalyptic language.**

Timing is Everything

I once attended a Kay Arthur Inductive Bible Study course in which it was taught that in interpreting a passage one must ask the “5 Ws and an H.” I doubt there is anyone who would disagree that asking **who (or to whom), what, when, where, why and how** is important. However, in interpreting prophecy, I find that the majority of Christians today have an interpretive grid that they force onto the text with a predetermined agenda of what the “**what**” MUST mean, and then force

¹ The word “orthodox” has been dropped as redundant. Historically speaking, preterism has always been orthodox, but a relatively recent band of heretics have attempted to abscond with a historically good title. So called “full preterism” is nothing more than repackaged Hymenæamism (**2 Timothy 2:17**), and as such, is both creedally and Biblically heterodox (see my position paper *“Grave” Heresy - Hyper-Preterism and the Response of the Church* located at <http://www.preteristsite.com/docs/warrengrave.html> and my subsequent response to hyperpreterist Samuel Frost *Frosty the Strawman* located at <http://www.preteristsite.com/docs/warrenfrosty.html>). Preterists such as myself **do not deny any essential of the historic Christian faith**. We believe in the future bodily resurrection, the future bodily return of Jesus Christ, the future final redemption of Planet Earth, and the future Final Judgment. For further reference on the importance of terminology for both clarity and polemics, see my paper *SemANTICS: Perfuming the Hog* located at <http://www.preteristsite.com/docs/warrensemantics.html>).

the “when” to conform, complete with nonsensical gaps.² I realize that some may say the same in reverse of preterists, and that is my job to show that is not the case.

The futurist often prides himself on taking things literally, and yet, when confronted with clear time texts, this literality is abandoned and the doctrine of “imminence” is fabricated out of whole cloth. These same people state that Jesus’ Second Coming is “soon” and “near,” and expect us to understand by those words what they normally mean. Yet, these same people when they encounter these same words in sacred Scripture twist them beyond recognition. They say that God meant “*it could be soon,*” or “*it may be near.*” **But God did not say that.** He said, “*at hand – soon – some standing here will not taste death – the generation will not pass away* (in case we were really thick, which obviously we are) – *near – shortly – quickly.*” God pretty much exhausted the Greek language with synonyms for saying that something big was going to happen in the first century, and yet most of the Church denies this and puts words in God’s mouth. Strong words? Yes, but this cuts to the heart of the test of a true prophet. If a prophet gives express time limitations for the fulfillment of his prophecy, it is circumventing the **Deuteronomy 18** test to ignore those limitations.

To now provide an introduction and examples for what I mean, I turn to the passage that was the watershed for my journey into preterism:

Matthew 24:34 – *Most assuredly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.*

Stop now and without any theological preconceptions let the full import of that statement sink in. Certainly the initial *prima facie* case is mine. Certainly Jesus *appears* to be saying that the people to whom He is speaking will not die until those things of which He spoke happened. This is certainly confirmed by numerous translations/renderings/paraphrases. For example amongst the renderings intended to make the text plain and simple see these:

[GNB] *Remember that all these things will happen before the people now living have all died.*

[NCV] *I tell you the truth, all these things will happen while the people of this time are still living.*

Even the Amplified Bible lends support:

² The competing eschatological view of “futurism” posits numerous gaps in time in prophetic texts that do not explicitly state any such gaps. Notable examples are the “seventy weeks” prophecy of Daniel 9 and the four kingdoms sequence of Daniel 2. Historicism and idealism do not do so, but have other ways of handling the timing texts.

Truly I tell you, this generation – that is, the whole multitude of people living at the same time, in a definite, given period – will not pass away till all these things take place.

Futurists have devised four major ways to get out of this pickle:

- “Generation” means race.
- This is referring to some future generation.
- “Generation” means wicked people of all time.
- Jesus did mean that generation then living but the prophecy is delayed.

(of course liberals “solve” it by merely saying Jesus was wrong)

I shall interact with them as they are raised in our discussion; however, attached for those interested in an excerpt from my full commentary on the Olivet Discourse, *It’s Not the End of the Word* (<http://www.preteristsite.com/plain/warrenend.html>) dealing with these arguments. And truth be told, if Matthew 24:34 were the only strong verse, I would not be a preterist, but it isn’t. Here are some more examples (this is meant to be a short list of the very plain verses, it is not exhaustive - all emphasis added):

Matt 10:23: *When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.*

Matt 16:28: *Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.*

Romans 16:20: *And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.*

1 Corinthians 10:11: *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*

James 5:8: *You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.....Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!*

1 John 2:18: *Little children, it is the last hour.*

Rev 1:1,3: *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must [u]shortly take place[/u].....Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near...*

Revelation 22:20: *He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*

Now if God *really had wanted to communicate* that this event was truly near, truly soon, truly at hand, truly to happen shortly, and truly to happen before all of them died, **what other words could He have used to express it if "near, soon, at hand, shortly, quickly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death until, this generation will not pass away until," do not cut it?** As Gary DeMar so aptly stated, *"If the Bible can be interpreted so 'soon' can mean 'late,' and 'near' can mean 'distant,' and 'shortly' can mean 'delayed,' and vice versa, then the Bible can meaning anything and nothing."*

So Plank One of the Positive Case for Preterism is the clear timing statements.

This then That...

This second plank is very much related to the first. However, where the first dealt with explicit references to the *timing* of **when** certain things would take place, this plank deals with **chronology**, or "in what order or sequence will these things take place?" Only the preterist system makes coherent sense out of all the chronology passages in a consistent manner. One such example is the "end of the age" mentioned in **Matthew 24**.

When Christ ascended to the Father, He sat at His right hand and is in the process of having all enemies put under His feet. Many passages tell us this, but the most important for this particular point is **1 Corinthians 15:20:28** since it has some very important chronological indicators....

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

ONE: Christ was raised first. That is a past event.

TWO: Those who are Christ's will be raised when He comes, this is a future event even to us (the careful reader will note that preterists do not consider this the same "coming" as in **Matthew 24**).

THREE: He will come at the end of the His reign, making his reign a present reality for us, and the end a future event for us.

FOUR: His reign cannot end until He has destroyed all rule and authority and power, again making His reign a present, progressive reality for us.

FIVE: The last enemy to be destroyed is death, there are NO MORE enemies after death, and no more rule and authority and power before death is destroyed since death is the LAST ENEMY that Christ has to deal with. **Stop and let this marinate and sink in.**

SIX: After He destroys the last enemy the Messianic Kingdom is over, it is delivered up to God the Father and God will be all in all.

So, this passage tells us that all enemies will finally and completely be put under Christ's feet at the resurrection³ with the destruction of the last enemy, death, and at that point, Christ's special Messianic reign **ends**.

Let's add to this mix **Ephesians 1:15-22**:

....according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, NOT ONLY IN THIS AGE BUT ALSO IN THAT WHICH IS TO COME. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

So while Paul tells us 1 Corinthians that the resurrection ends the age of the special Messianic reign, Paul tells us in Ephesians that this special reign lasts through the age in which he was writing and through the age to come. Now unless we are at least in some sense a citizen in that age to come, then there is yet a whole age to come before Christ can return to resurrect the saved. **NO ONE BELIEVES THAT.**

This ties in perfectly with **Revelation 20** as well. We are in the millennium, the *breaking in of the age to come* from Paul's perspective; we are spiritually reigning

³ The chronology of the resurrection is particularly fatal to any species of premillennialism and in particular "pre-trib" rapture theorists. The resurrection of ALL takes place on "the last day." There is no Biblical support for a resurrection to take place at least seven years prior to the "millennium," then another one at the beginning of the millennium, and yet another one at the end, which is what rapturism requires. For a fuller argument see my paper *Raising Cain and Abel* at <http://www.preteristsite.com/docs/warrenraising.html>. Further rapturism has the problem of explaining who will populate this millennium if all the saved are glorified into their resurrection bodies at the Second Coming and all the wicked are destroyed. Scripture is clear that people marry, have children, and die in the Millennium (Isaiah 65:17-25), yet people in glorified bodies cannot do this. There is also the added oddity of positing that people with glorified bodies are living side by side by people without glorified bodies.

and ruling and sharing in the First Resurrection (Christ's resurrection). When the "thousand years"⁴ are done, Christ will put all rule and authority and power under His feet (described as Gog and Magog), He will resurrect the just and the damned (the second resurrection), and THEN the eternal state begins. The chronology is tight and inescapable. There is no way around it that does not involve incredible sequential contortions and liberal uses of the Magic Gap Dust.

On a side note, there is some confusion that is to be had with the fluidity of the Biblical use of "age" and "world." There are times, such as in the above, where it can only be referring to the literal progression of time from one age into another. In such a scheme, there is arguably three "ages: the age in which Christ spoke, the Millennium, and the eternal state"⁵. The chronology I presented completely rules out and makes impossible any idea that "an end of the age" has not already come. However, to make this complete, there are other times when the Scripture seems to just as clearly teach just two ages. How is this resolved? By recognizing that Biblical terms are not rigid and can be used in different ways in different contexts. In the context of this discussion, "age" and "world" have shades of meaning and can be used "rigidly" or "loosely." When *sheer* chronology or timing is obviously in view, I am quite comfortable in saying that we should interpret it rigidly chronologically. However, there are times when indeed it is employed to compare the Old Covenant age with the New Covenant age.... Thus rigidly two consecutive ages in the stream of history, and there are other times when it is employed more "loosely" as in the idea of "world" or "state of being" of simply "this present time" (without implying an end) in which it is used to compare the earthly state with the future eternal state. It encompasses "world" in a sense not necessarily of geography but of anthropology, dealing with the mortal concerns and affairs of men. This does not do violence to the semantical range of the word (Thayer spends pages on it) and does clear up a lot of confusion, and again, imbues the preterist system with the only systematically coherent resolution of both timing and chronology.

Moving on to give a whack with the third plank....

⁴ The term "thousand years" is understood by the preterist as Biblical symbolism for a long and perfectly complete period of time. There is abundant Biblical justification for this interpretation of "one thousand." For example, Scripture states that God owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Ps. 50:10), keeps His promises to a thousand generations (Deut. 7:9), and that one day in His courts is better than a thousand outside (Ps. 84:10). No one, not even the most 1 futurist, takes those verses to mean that the cattle on the 1001st hill belongs to someone else; that the poor saps born in the 1001st have no assurance of God keeping His promises; or that while a while day in His courts is better than a thousand outside, it is not better than 1001 days outside. However, I will say that one futurist actually tried to prove to me that "hills" actually means "mountains" and that there are only one thousand mountains on the planet capable of sustaining cattle. I kid you not.

⁵ However, it could also be stated that the three "ages" are really only two and that the period of the Millennium is a time of overlap in which the "age to come" is "breaking in" to the present age by the presence of the Church.

I Am Going to Punch Your Lights Out

Now no one reading this statement would take it to be a threat that I am going to break into their house and wreak havoc upon their lamps. Why? Because it is an obvious colloquialism... **to US**. It may not be as obvious to someone in another culture, as I am sure we have all heard humorous stories about how innocent expressions can be misunderstood when transliterated to another culture (for example I just found out what a particular American colloquialism for “butt” means in Australia and I can assure you, the meaning is *really* changed. Now what does this have to do with preterism? Scads.... For when we read a statement like this:

Matthew 24:29: *Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*

... we low-context moderns have images of the very fabric of the entire universe unraveling. But is that what is really being communicated here? Not if we use a basic rule of Biblical interpretation: use the Bible to interpret the Bible if possible. Do we find this same kind of “decreation imagery” elsewhere in Scripture? Yes we do, in fact, this type of language **is identical**, to things said to have already happened to ancient Israel, Babylon, Egypt, and Edom:

Isaiah 13:9-10: *Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine.*

The context makes it clear that this is a description of a **past** judgment on Babylon. The language is almost identical to Jesus’ words in the Discourse, and the NAS even has the Jesus’ words indicated as being a direct quote from this passage, a past judgment in which the created universe did not actually dissolve.

Also

Ezekiel 32:7-8: *When I put out your light, I will cover the heavens, and make its stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of the heavens I will make dark over you, and bring darkness upon your land,’ Says the Lord GOD.*

Again, this is a **past** judgment on Egypt. Did all this LITERALLY happen back then?

Isaiah 34:4-5: *All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; all their host shall fall down as the leaf falls from the vine, and as fruit falling from a fig tree. “For My sword shall be bathed in heaven;*

Indeed it shall come down on Edom, and on the people of My curse, for judgment.

And this is a **past** judgment on Edom. **Did I miss the dissolution of the universe back then?**

Jeremiah 4:23-26: (go back to verses 14 and 16 to see the context) *I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form, and void; and the heavens, they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled, and all the hills moved back and forth. I beheld, and indeed there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens had fled. I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was a wilderness, and all its cities were broken down at the presence of the LORD, by His fierce anger.*

This is a historical judgment on Israel.

This cosmic imagery is not limited only to ideas of judgment and cursing, the exact same imagery in reverse is used when a nation is blessed:

Isaiah 60:19-20: *The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; But the LORD will be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory. Your sun shall no longer go down, nor shall your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended.*

Now is the “sun” here *literal*? How can the literal sun no longer give light and yet no longer go down? Is it a big ashen ball up in the sky? For anyone who thinks so, take a look at this next passage...

Moreover the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD binds up the bruise of His people and heals the stroke of their wound.

These are speaking of the same or similar blessing events, and the eschatological blessing. Well in this one, not only does the “sun” still give light, **it is intensified sevenfold!** Now no one in their right mind thinks that a sevenfold brightness to the sun would literally be a good thing. The earth would be utterly incinerated.

Jesus’ words are no different. He is describing a cataclysmic judgment to occur upon the nation of Israel. But some may say “*okay Miss Smarty Pants, I may buy your idea of decreation language being used hyperbolically but what about this??*”

Matthew 24:30: *...And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

Well again, does the Bible tells us anything about “coming” and “clouds”? Yes it sure does. The OT is replete with language of YHWH “coming” in judgment and being enfolded in clouds, and not once did it mean that He literally set foot on earth or saddled up a cloud. For example:

Isaiah 19:1– *The burden against Egypt. Behold, the LORD rides on a swift cloud, and will come into Egypt; the idols of Egypt will totter at His presence, and the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst.*

If we were to interpret this passage the way that futurism does the Discourse, we would be forced to believe that YHWH actually sat atop a cloud, rode on into Egypt, dismounted, and then started kicking over idols. Why don't the literalists do this? Why aren't they consistent?

Even in Revelation, Jesus threatens to “come” and visit judgment upon real historical first century churches if they did not repent, but certainly He was not threatening a bodily visitation or the end of the world (**Revelation 2:16, 3:3**).

For some other passages connecting clouds and judgment, see **2 Samuel 22:12; Jeremiah 4:13; Ezekiel 30:3; Nahum 1:3; Zephaniah 1:14-15**.

So the third plank of the Positive Case for Preterism is the proper use of apocalyptic symbolism and hyperbole.

These points were summed up beautiful by preterist R.C. Sproul:

The advantage of preterism is that it 'saves the phenomena' of the New Testament time-frame references; it interprets biblical prophecy according to the images used in Scripture itself; and it offers a framework for consistent interpretation of the difficult apocalyptic literature of the Bible, such as that found in Daniel and Revelation."

There are other chronological passages which can be brought into play which space does not permit me to do so here and keep this as a brief introductory piece. However, I do ask the reader to take a careful look at **Daniel 2:44**...

And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

And especially in light of everything else that has been presented, pay careful attention to both the **chronology** of the predicted Messianic Kingdom (it follows after Rome), and the *timing* of the predicted Messianic Kingdom (it not only follows after Rome, it is set up while Rome still exists). This is such a powerful predictive verse for the coming of Messiah and His Kingdom, yet futurism completely eviscerates it with its insistence that the whole first century world has to be recreated (i.e. rebuilt Jerusalem, rebuilt Temple, rebuilt nation of Israel,

reconstituted Roman Empire) in order to fulfill prophecy that was clearly fulfilled in the original first century world.

RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER STUDY:

I have a great deal of preterist material at my website, The PreteristSite, located at <http://www.preteristsite.com>. Also, I am one of the owners of a very active theology debate forum, TheologyWeb, located at <http://www.theologyweb.com> at which there are a great many preterists willing to discuss the issues.

The majority of “preterist” material on the Internet is of the heretical variety as the greatest blessing of the Internet is also its greatest flaw - anyone can publish anything for little cost. PreteristSite is the largest, if not the only, eschatological website dedicated solely to orthodox preterism and refuting hyperpreterism.

David Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, a commentary on the Book of Revelation, very useful though it gets a bit far-out in its esotericism at times

Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, this is a very good introductory book on preterism

Kenneth Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, a thorough defense of the dating of Revelation before the fall of the Jerusalem in AD 70

Hank Hanegraaff, *The Apocalypse Code*, a good though repetitive basic presentation of preterism

George Peter Holford, *The Destruction of Jerusalem: An Absolute and Irresistible Proof of the Divine Origin of Christianity*, a great apologetic on how this passage and subject is one of the most important in validating Christ's claims, available online here: <http://www.preteristsite.com/docs/holford.html>

Philip Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation*, a preterist presentation of Daniel 9, available online here: <http://www.historicism.com/mauro/mauro70.htm>

Dan Trotter, *The Preterist Primer Series*, a series of audio recordings on the basic of preterism, available online here: <http://www.preteristsite.com/docs/trotterindex.html>

Dee Dee Warren, *It's Not the End of the World!*, an extensive commentary on Matthew 24, available online here: <http://www.preteristsite.com/plain/warrenend.html>

ATTACHMENT A
FOUR PROOFS OF THE FIRST CENTURY REFERENT OF
“THIS GENERATION” OF MATTHEW 24

(the parenthetical source notations refer to my bibliography in *It's Not the End of World*, <http://www.preteristsite.com/plain/biblioindex.html>)

PROOF NUMBER ONE: The phrase "this generation" everywhere else it is used in the NT refers to the generation then living, and the near demonstrative "this" makes it indisputable.

PROOF NUMBER TWO: The destruction the Temple then standing in AD70 limits the fulfillment of the rest of the passage to the same time frame.

PROOF NUMBER THREE: The other "near" temporal indicators in the Gospels support the first century referent for "this generation," specifically Matthew 16:27-28 and Matthew 10:23

PROOF NUMBER FOUR: The context of the Olivet Discourse is a clear first century Judean context, NOT the "end of the world" it is made out to be in modern prophecy thought.

Okay before I get started note that Jesus introduces His timing statement with the very emphatic *"I tell you."* The literal rendering of His words is, *"Truly I tell you that by no means passes away this generation until all these things have happened."* The *"by no means"* is a very strong double negative (*ou me*) in the Greek which creates added emphasis. Jesus is staking His very reputation upon these words.

PROOF NUMBER ONE: The phrase *"this generation"* everywhere else it is used in the NT refers to the generation then living, and the near demonstrative "this" makes it indisputable.

Those who deny that *"this generation"* refers to the generation to whom Jesus was speaking in the Matthew 24 context must maintain that *"this generation"* there means something different from the way it is used in every other place in Matthew and the rest of the NT. Matthew 23:36 clearly refers to the Pharisees and their associates [Ge TGT 818-182]. Why should we interpret *"this generation"* in Matthew 24:34 in a way different from 23:36 since Jesus is answering His disciple's questions regarding His statement in Matthew 23:36 that their house ~ the temple ~ is being left to them desolate [Sch M24GT 56-57]? The usual rejoinder is *"All of Matthew 24 could not have been fulfilled during the lifetime of the apostles. There must be a future fulfillment even though 'this generation' seems to refer to those who lived between AD30 and 70."*

But this is not the way we should interpret Scripture. If Jesus had said that all the events prior to Matthew 24:34 would occur before the contemporary generation passed away, then we must take Him at His word ~ even if we still hold to a future "fulfillment" ~ the primary fulfillment must be within the scope given by the Prophet. Dispensationalists insist on literalism. Why not in this instance? If "this generation" is taken literally, all of the predictions were to take place within the lifespan of those living at that time. The integrity of the Bible is at stake in the discussion of the Biblical meaning of "*this generation*."

Secondly, the use of "*this generation*" throughout the Gospels makes it clear that it means the generation to whom Jesus was speaking. The following is a list of every occurrence of "this generation" in the New Testament [De ETF 68-69]:

Matthew 11:16: *But to what shall I liken this generation?*

Matthew 12:41-42: *The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.*

Matthew 23:36: *Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation*

Matthew 24:34: *Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.*

Mark 8:12: *But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation"*

Mark 13:30: *Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.*

Luke 7:31: *And the Lord said, "To what then shall I liken the men of this generation, and what are they like?"*

Luke 11:29: *And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, "This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet.*

Luke 11:30: *For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation*

Luke 11:31-32: *The queen of the South will rise up in 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 indeed a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.*

Luke 11:49-51: *Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,' that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation.*

Luke 17:25: *But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.*

Luke 21:32: *Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place.*

Acts 2:40: *And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."*

Without exception these verses describe events within the lifetime of the then present generation. All the evidence points to the generation of Jews who heard Jesus' words and would suffer the same judgment as the scribes, Pharisees, and chief priests if they did not heed Jesus' warning.

I am focusing on the entire phrase *"this generation"* rather than just *"generation"* as the near qualifier does add an important emphasis. However, even if we were to take a NT survey of *"generation"* one would be hard pressed to find any example where it departs into meaning anything other than a specific group of people living at a specified time within a human lifetime [Sch M24GT 51-52]. There is only one possible exception, and that is Luke 16:8, and I would argue emphatically that it is not either. 1st Peter 2:9 is NOT an exception though it is often alleged ignorantly. The Greek word for *"generation"* in 1st Peter 2:9 is NOT *"genea,"* the word at issue here. It is *"genos"* ~ meaning nation. If Matthew 24:34 had said *"genos"* instead of *"genea,"* we would be looking at a whole different kettle of fish.

A survey of Bible commentators will show 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 referred to events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. Here are some examples (there are many more):

John Lightfoot: *"Hence it appears plain enough, that the foregoing verses are not to be understood of the last judgment, but, as we said, of the destruction of Jerusalem. There were some among the disciples, particularly John, who lived to see these things come to pass. With Matthew 16:28 compare John 21:22. And there were some Rabbins alive at the time when Christ spoke these things that lived until the city was destroyed."* "A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica" cited in [Sch M24GT 54-55]

Thomas Newton: *"It is to me a wonder how any man can refer part of the foregoing discourse to the destruction of Jerusalem, and part to the end of the world, or any other distant event, when it is said so positively here in the conclusion, all these things shall be fulfilled in this generation."* cited in [Bra M24F 198-199]

Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida: *"The obvious meaning of the words "this generation" is the people contemporary with Jesus. Nothing can be gained by trying to take the word in any other sense other than its normal one. In Mark, the word always has this meaning."* (I have lost my citation of this work from my notes)

John Gill: *"This is a full and clear proof, that not any thing that is said before verse 34, relates to the Second Coming of Christ, the day of judgment, and the end of the world, but that all belongs to the coming of the son of man in the destruction of Jerusalem, and to the end of the Jewish state."* ("An Exposition of the New Testament") cited in [Sch M24GT 53]

D.A. Carson: *"This generation can only with the greatest difficulty be made to mean anything other than the generation living when Jesus spoke."* ("Matthew") in the Bible Expositor's Commentary, cited in [De ETF 69]

William Lane: *"The significance of the temporal reference has been debated but in Mark "this generation" clearly designates the contemporaries of Jesus and there is no consideration from the context which lends any support to any other proposal. Jesus solemnly affirms that the generation contemporary with His disciples will witness the fulfillment of His prophetic word, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the dismantling of the temple."* ("The Gospel of Mark") cited in [Sch M24GT 56]

Adam Clarke: *"This chapter contains a prediction of the utter destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, and the subversion of the whole political constitution of the Jews; and is one of the most valuable portions of the new covenant Scriptures with respect to the evidence which it furnishes of the truth of Christianity. Every thing which our Lord foretold should come on the temple, city, and people of the Jews, has been fulfilled in the most correct and astonishing manner. . . "* ("Clarke's Commentary," 3 vols) cited in [De LDM 183]

This is not some new, Johnny-come-lately concept ~ all of which should be taken with a large grain of salt ~ it is a historic interpretation of the Church.

But let's build upon this puzzle. If it is possible that Matthew 24:34 can mean something else, and even though the context is clearly first century, what other texts illuminate this? The clincher for me is when we compare

Matthew 24:33-34: *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.*

with

Luke 21:31-32: *So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place.*

And then add in

Matthew 16:27-28: *For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.*

This combination of verses tells us exactly what time frame Matthew 24:34 is referring to. Let me explain. . . . Matthew 24:33 mentions that when all these things happen "it" is near. What is "it"? Luke equates "it" with the "Kingdom of God." The Kingdom of God would be near, AT THE DOORS. Matthew 16:28 tells us that there were some standing there that would not taste death until they saw the Son of man coming in His kingdom. The parallels are seemingly inescapable. Thus ~ Matthew 16:28 gives us then the definition of *"this generation not passing away,"* it means *"some of those standing there will not taste death until. . . "*

This CANNOT mean the Transfiguration as some try to do to avoid the obvious implications here. Why? Two reasons at a minimum. Verse 28 does not stand alone. It is intimately connected with verse 27 which CANNOT be said to refer to the Transfiguration. Second, the Transfiguration happened only 6 days later. Can you imagine that Jesus would say something so inane as "some of you standing here will still be alive in six days"? I bet ALL of them were still alive. Jesus introduced this prophesy with His most solemn preface; . . . *"Most assuredly I say."* That ALWAYS introduces very heavy and profound stuff, not inane prophecies that even Jean Dixon would have a shot at getting right. He must have been speaking about an event that was far enough in the future that many of his listeners would be dead, but not so far away that all of His listeners would be dead.

DeMar notes a somewhat novel explanation by Tommy Ice who claims that since Jesus spoke these words to "His disciples" (see Matthew 16:24) declaring that "some" of these same disciples would not taste death before the described event. Since only John survived until the destruction of Jerusalem, only one disciple survived, not "some" of them, did not survive, and thus this saying must mean something else, namely the Transfiguration, which suffers from all the flaws noted above [De ICET]. Additionally it can be noted that Jesus did not say they would get a preview or foretaste of this "coming" but that said coming would in fact happen with rewards. DeMar also rightly notes that Ice is incorrect in absolutely declaring that "His disciples" must of necessity be only referring to the twelve as there are other instances in which that word is used of those who were following His teaching (see Matthew 5:1 with Matthew 7:28, Matthew 8:21)[De ICET].

On another point - remember that what is being spoken of is the *"Kingdom of God."* Is this some earthly, geo-political rule from Jerusalem? at which time the ethnic Jews will once again be elevated as God's chosen people above all others?

Apparently not [Gh PER 7-10]:

Luke 17:20-21: *Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."*

Jesus affirms the present reality of the Kingdom of God in His presence - it is an internal spiritual reality, not an external one.

John 18:34-37: *Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."*

Notice, Jesus' Kingdom is not of the sort that His disciples would achieve by force, nor is it of an earthly character comparable to Rome with a ruler and earthly territory - which is exactly what pre-millennial futurism requires.

Now we know what the Kingdom isn't - what is it?

Mark 10:23-26: *Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is*

easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?"

Interesting, I never noticed this until my friend Hitch pointed it out, but the disciples equates the Kingdom with salvation, and Jesus did not correct them

Mark 1:14-15: *Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."*

I can't say it any better than Hitch who commented, *"The theme is repentance, not real estate."*

Romans 14:17: *The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

You mean it isn't a literal reign from a literal earthly throne in earthly Jerusalem?
[Doh!]

Further, ethnicity assures nothing:

Matthew 8:10-12: *"Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

The *"sons of the Kingdom"* are those born into Israel, and at this time Jesus is pronouncing doom upon them and granting Kingdom privileges to far reaches of Gentiledom[Gh PER 8-9]

Matthew 3:7-10: *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."*

Pedigree is worthless without repentance and fruits.

But what about the idea that Paul was preaching a different message to the Gentiles as the "millennium" is primarily a fulfillment of promises to ethnic Israel? First, I already dealt with ethnicity, but is the other part correct? No.

Acts 28:17-20: *And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: "Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death. But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation. For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."*

What Paul was preaching, and that for which he was persecuted, was the hope of Israel, not simply Gentiles or those converted in the "Church age" which has nothing to do with (allegedly) with ethnic Israel. There is not one Gospel passage where Christ offers a literal earthly Kingdom to the Jews nor does He ever offer to sit on a literal earthly throne. The one passage (not in the Gospels) that is often brought up is:

Acts 2:30-32: *Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit upon his throne. . .*

Which seems all well and good taken alone, but really take a close look at the following text

..seeing this beforehand, he spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor would His flesh see corruption, God raised up this Jesus, of which we all are witnesses.

Peter is making the point that the resurrection of Christ fulfills this prophecy!! Notice the tight connection between the phrases "raise up" in the one verse. This is not speaking of some future throne but to the state of Christ at the time that Peter spoke those words.

Peter continues. . . .

Acts 2:33: *Therefore being exalted to the right of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this which you now see and hear.*

The position of being at the right hand of God indicates PRESENT rulership and authority. While earthly kings were only figuratively at God's right hand, the ultimate King did away with the shadows and types and is literally at God's right hand, exercising ultimate cosmic rule.

Acts 2:34-35: *For David has not ascended into the heavens, but he says himself, "The LORD said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand until I place Your enemies as a footstool to Your feet."*

Peter goes on to explain that David NEVER achieved the heights of rulership prophesied about, but that his seed would, and would sit and rule in the heavens.

Acts 2:36: *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God made this same Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

This is the concluding statement of the whole sermon. Ponder the reason why Peter said Jesus was made BOTH Lord and Christ. The title "Lord" is the title of His current Messianic reign. Christ is not just the Savior, He is the King.

Another interesting passage is in **Acts 15:16:**

After this I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David which has fallen down; and I will build again its ruins, and I will set it up.

Peter once again states that the rebuilding of David's house and tabernacle is fulfilled then!! It was not an earthly tabernacle, just as it is not an earthly throne.

PROOF NUMBER TWO: The destruction the Temple then standing in AD70 limits the fulfillment of the rest of the passage to the same time frame.

Okay this is the Big One in the words of Fred Sanford. It is this one that I think demolishes futurism singlehandedly. I am going to be using the opening round in a long-ago debate I did on the Great Tribulation for the bulk of this post.

When I make the statement that the Great Tribulation spoken of in Matthew 24 is over, futurists are inevitably drawn like a magnet to Daniel 9. Now this is understandable since Jesus mentions the phrase "*the abomination of desolation*" which finds its place in either Daniel 9:27 or Daniel 12:11 or both. However, the futurist then inserts a handy-dandy gap in between the 69th and the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy (which is illegitimate and has blasphemous implications for other reasons) and through somewhat circular reasoning uses this to "prove" that the Great Tribulation is future.

This makes absolutely no sense and does great violence to the text. When Daniel receives this prophecy, Jerusalem and the Temple are in ruins. He is told that the city will be rebuilt (and by implication the Temple will be rebuilt also). Within the same prophecy he is told that Jerusalem and the Temple will be destroyed. Gabriel also exhorts Daniel in verse 25 to know and understand this vision. Is there any chance in a billion years that Daniel knew and understood

that it was not the city and Temple that he was just told would be rebuilt that are also spoken about as being destroyed?? Would he have any idea without any textual clue whatsoever that the destruction of THAT city and Temple would be skipped over and omitted. . . the city and Temple would be rebuilt again (without any mention of this event in the text), and it is THAT future city and Temple that are referenced as being destroyed?? This is simply unbelievable. Only one city and Temple are in view in this prophecy.

However, further to the demise of futurism, Jesus makes it clear what Temple and city are in view beyond any shadow of a doubt in the Olivet Discourse, which futurists believe is speaking of the 70th week of Daniel (preterists don't believe that it has anything to do with the 70th week of Daniel, but does have to do with events spoken of in Daniel 9, such as the abomination of desolation, which happen "outside" of the 70 weeks). In the Olivet Discourse the disciples ask Jesus certain questions, and these were not asked in a vacuum. They weren't just standing around and decided to barrage Jesus with questions. The questions were prompted as follows:

First using Mark as a source: *Then as He went out of the temple (the Temple that existed back then), one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!"* (they are asking about the Temple that existed back then) *And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down."* (referring to the Temple that existed back then!)

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, (that existed back then) Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, "Tell us, when will these things be? . . ." (it does not matter that they asked Him more questions, obviously one of the things that they wanted to know was when the Temple that existed back then would be destroyed)

Next using Luke as a source: *Then, as some spoke of the temple, (the Temple that existed back then) how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, "These things which you see ~ (the Temple that was before their very eyes right then) the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down."* *So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be?* (again, part of "these things" MUST include the destruction that He just prophesied that prompted their questions to begin with)

Lastly using Matthew as a source: *Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. (the Temple that existed back then) And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? (the Temple that existed back then) Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here* (notice the word "here" it is referring to those actual stones, the ones that existed then) *upon another, that shall not be thrown down."*

All these of the Synoptics of the Olivet Discourse contain the very solemn declaration by Jesus, "*Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.*" (Matthew 24:34, Luke 21:32, Mark 13:31)

Now we know when the city and Temple were destroyed. It was in AD70. If that is "one" of "all these things," then ALL of the rest of that passage, at least up to Matthew 24:33, Luke 21:31, and Mark 13:31 happened in the first century as well. It is inescapable. The destruction of the then existing Temple is a completely unique, datable, and nonrepeatable event. If the prophecy was not primarily fulfilled in the first century, it can never be. This also ties in with the "abomination of desolation" and Daniel 9. Jesus in identifying what Temple He was referring to totally destroys any notion that the Temple being referred to in Daniel 9 is any other Temple than the one that existed when Christ gave His Discourse. There is NO way around this. It is an intractable problem for futurism.

Now a recent attempt at futurist explaining away Proofs One and Two has been the "*well all the other uses may mean those then living but this is a prophetic use and thus a horse of a different colour.*" Tommy Ice is the most well known guy that uses this and other usages I have seen are merely parroting Tommy:

It's true that every other use of the phrase "this generation" in the New Testament, does refer to Jesus' contemporaries because the context supports that. But, those are historical uses and Matthew 24 is a prophetic use. Therefore, if Matthew 24 is talking about a future time, then the timing of the phrase "this generation" is related to whatever time frame Christ is speaking of, right? [Ic DVP 393]

[Sigh] First it is nice to see Tommy conceding that every other use does mean Jesus' contemporaries ~ and that would include Matthew 23:36 which is part of the kick-off setting to this whole Discourse as already demonstrated at length earlier in this commentary.

However, as seen in the preceding Proof, even if we were to grant that "this generation" refers to the generation that "sees the signs" etc ~ the one unrepeatable event occurred in the first century thus the whole enchilada up to that point is thrust into the first century. This alone defeats this whole nonsense. But I have a devilish streak that just loves to see arguments implode so let's take another shot at it shall we?

Tommy claims that yes, all the other usages mean contemporaries, but since they are historical and not prophetic usages then there is a distinction. Really?

Matthew 23:31-36: *Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation*

of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Well were all those things happening right then? Noooo. was Jesus then telling them about something that was going to happen at some point in the future to them? Yes. . . well guess what that means? It means that Matthew 23:36 is ALSO a prophetic use, and it is part of this same background that bookends the whole narrative, and means, by Tommy's own admission, the dudes then living. So much for this "prophetic use" exception.

PROOF NUMBER THREE: The other "near" temporal indicators in the Gospels support the first century referent for "this generation," specifically Matthew 16:27-28 and Matthew 10:23

I dealt with Matthew 16:27-28 above, so now we can take a quick look at Matthew 10:23:

Matthew 10:23: *When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.*

The issue with this verse is obvious. Jesus, speaking to His disciples, tells them that they will not finish their assigned task (even if it was yet to be assigned in Acts 1:8) until He "comes." Now there are several ways to explain this passage as well that deny a preteristic understanding, and I will reiterate, almost every futuristic explanation makes sense or is possible in isolation. However, preterism is a holistic and cumulative case and not just based on verses in isolation.

But one cannot just look at this verse; it is necessary to back up a few verses.

Matthew 10:17-23: *But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. "Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another.*

This is strikingly reminiscent of Jesus' words that introduce the Olivet Discourse:

Matthew 23:34: . . . *some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city.* . .

Mark 13:10-13: *But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.*

This primary first-century referent seems certain. So what is Jesus telling them? Time is short for geographical and ethnic Israel. Hurry. You will be persecuted, but keep going and do not lose heart, for you will not even finish going through the cities before He comes to judge.

In a recent debate, one futurist tried to say that all Jesus was saying was that He would meet up with them before they were done with their task. However, this is impossible, and quite ridiculous. The context is clear, and it is not during Christ's earthly ministry. This explanation would have us believe that the disciples, during the three years of Christ's ministry were hated by all and fleeing from city to city. There is absolutely no record of that. And Jesus' mention of enduring to the end there makes that interpretation impossible. Jesus is speaking of an intense period of persecution and tribulation that would not end before He comes, and they would not have time to finish their task. No Christians were put to death during Christ's earthly ministry, nor were they threatened. Such an explanation also puts inanities in Christ's mouth and forgets the issues of lack of modern transportation. In no way would the disciples have thought that Christ was right then sending them expecting to make it through ALL the cities of Israel for which He would have to correct them to let them know that He would meet up with them well before that was done. That is really silly.

I note the following typical footnote (this one was taken from John MacArthur's study Bible) ~ *These verses clearly have an eschatological significance that goes beyond the disciple's immediate mission. The persecutions he describes seems to belong to the tribulation period that precedes Christ's second coming, alluded to in v. 23.*

That is one giant unsupported assertion and begged question. How in the world do the persecutions seem to belong to the future? Didn't those things indeed happen back in the first century? Does any of us feel threatened by the local Jews or synagogue? What happened to the much-vaunted plain and literal

rendering? These verses only seem that way due to an a priori commitment to an eschatological system. Now that is not necessarily wrong and bad, but one cannot claim that the meaning just proceeds naturally from this one text, or that such would have been obvious to the first century listener steeped in OT "coming" imagery.

PROOF NUMBER FOUR: The Olivet Discourse clearly concerns first century Judea, NOT the "end of the world" it is made out to be in modern prophecy thought.

But before that I will tie up some loose ends, specifically dealing with those (now rare) who will claim that generation means "race" or something similar and other less common explanations.

Could "generation" in Matthew 24:34 mean "race?"

That explanation is less popular now. Most futurists today eschew it, but some notable persons still do, and it is in fact used by notable historicist Tony Warren (though he doesn't use "race" but rather "kind" which is an important distinction) ~ <http://members.aol.com/twarren14/generation.html>

I am going to use some of his points as anchors for my argument since Tony is articulate (even though wrong) and his points are not uncommon. However, I find it disturbing that Tony still has not corrected something that I blasted him on several years ago which is blatantly and inexcusably misleading. First he quotes:

1 Peter 2:9: *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

Tony then sez: *"Here we see the 'truth' of the matter. We have two distinct generations coexisting at the same time. A Generation of Evil, and a Chosen Generation. They don't last simply a lifetime, they last until Christ returns. One shall not escape the damnation of Hell, and the other is a special people who shall escape the damnation of Hell."*

Bad, bad Tony using an English translation to prove a Greek point. Everywhere else in his article, and in Matthew 24:34, the Greek word is GENE. In this passage, the Greek word is GENOS. Tony knows this, so why didn't he tell his readers? He does earlier mention that there are two words that are translated generation, but doesn't tell his readers that one of them, GENOS, does mean race or kind every time, and in fact it is the English translation of it as "generation" that is questionable, not that it means that any Greek word that is translated "generation" can mean "race" or "kind." This is inexcusable from a person of Tony's standing. I was hoping he would have changed this by now. It is

not uncommon to see this Petrine passage misused in this way ~ but it supports nothing, it is a different Greek word.

Tony's next strongest argument (and one used by some futurists) is:

"It is self evident that if this word meant that physical generation were all vipers who couldn't escape the damnation of hell, then it would mean all, including the Apostles who themselves were part of that 'time generation.' But obviously, Christ is not talking about all that physical generation, He is talking about those who are children of Satan, these are the generation of vipers (Psalms 140:1-3). Evil and wicked men who out of the evil in their hearts bring forth evil things. And so we see that there is not only precedence for the word generation not to be understood to mean that particular time, but many times the context itself demands it not be understood that way. Generation of vipers did not mean everyone there, so it could not mean that physical Generation. It is most obviously speaking about a spiritually wicked family [gennema], not a time period or literal generation there."

and

Luke 11:50: *"That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation."*

"Is all those people standing there (the physical generation) guilty of the blood of all the Prophets, and will be judged of God for it? God Forbid! The Apostles and all believers there won't have the Blood of the Prophets required of them. That is quite obvious to anyone who knows scripture. God says every man is responsible only for his own sin, not the sins of others (Deuteronomy 24:16). Which is why The Blood of these prophets will be required of 'that generation.' ..How? Because Those who killed the Prophets, though they lived hundreds of years before, were part of 'that Generation.' They are part of the family of Satan their father, for the generation of evil spans time."

"This couldn't either logically, rationally, or Biblically mean everyone physically there at the time, so what it does mean should be evident with a little thought. It is a kinship of evil. Those of the lineage of Satan. Jesus called them, 'Children of the Devil.'"

Well, I have already shown how connected Matthew 24:34 and Luke 21:31 to Matthew 16:28 indisputably shows what "generation" means in this context. An examination of its usage in the NT will also show that it means the ordinary meaning in most of its usages there as well (there is only one possible exception). The NT authors had "*genos*" (like Peter did) to use if they wanted to mean a kind of people over a long period of time. [Sch M24GT]

Also examining Matthew 23 will also inform us as to what generation is in view. Christ is berating the Pharisees and promises them that all of these things would come upon that generation. Is He referring to the literal generation of the Pharisees standing there or the more generic "generation" of the offspring of Satan? Well the context tells us besides the fact that I have the more natural usage of the word on my side. That is always a weighty consideration in a hermeneutical discussion. What would have been the understanding of the first-century audience without any additional clues from Christ? Well let's go back to the context with the introductory remark in Matthew 23 that lead up to Matthew 24.

Christ is literally speaking to the Pharisees and condemning them. He is pointing out THEIR specific sins. And here is the climactic passage:

Matthew 23:31-36: *Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. ASSUREDLY I SAY TO YOU ALL THESE THINGS WILL COME UPON THIS GENERATION.*

Now Tony makes some points which on a surface level seem valid about this passage (technically he used a similar passage I suspect because the context kills him on this one more blatantly). First he objects that it would be unjust of God to repay that current generation for the blood of all the prophets (though ironically he has no issue with blaming ALL the unregenerate ~ hello!!!!). Now that is simply not true in a Biblical sense. All of the Old Testament testified about Christ. All of the prophets testified about Christ. Now Christ was there. In denying and murdering Christ, they confirmed and recommitted all of the lesser sins of their fathers who just denied the messengers. It is key that Christ tells them to fill up then on the measure of their father's guilt. God tells us in the OT that He visits the iniquity of the fathers unto the children if the children confirm and continue in their father's way. Their guilt is greater as they have the witness of their fathers and did not learn their lessons. He said that same thing when condemning the nation of Judah for not learning the lesson from watching her wicked sister, the nation of Israel, fall into harlotry. The condemnation is greater. Jesus spoke of this when talking about the levels of punishment in hell, and how those who just rejected His messengers and not Him personally would receive lesser punishment than those who rejected Him while He walked among them. And lastly it brings to mind Genesis 15:16 when God mentioned that the "iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full" and that it would take many generations (in the normal sense of the word) for that to be complete. Christ is making a direct

allusion to that passage and in fact to Daniel 9:24. His first century audience would have immediately recognized that. Also remember that God took vengeance on the people in the land generations later who victimized the Israelites during their Exodus by killing the stragglers and the sick. Why? Because they continued in and confirmed those sins. So for Tony to claim it isn't Biblically logical is flat out false.

Now with his other point, Tony is somewhat onto to something, but is again, straitjacketing Scripture when he states that if "this generation" meant the contemporaries of Christ, then the disciples would be included. That is again putting such a stricture on the words that the context itself does not require, and in fact, as I have shown the context is clear. However, there are overtones of a division between the righteous generation of that time and the wicked generation of that time but then it is an unwarranted leap to say that must mean that "*generation*" must span millennia. No, the division could exist and the word can still keep its ordinary sense of the meaning. That is the most natural reading of the passages. The disciples were saved out of that wicked generation. All the phrase needs to mean is the majority of the Jews at that point in time, and the fact is that the majority of the Jews, especially the leadership (and God throughout Scripture in the concept of Federal Headship corporately categorizes people in light of their established representatives, the leadership) did reject Christ. They were properly characterized as a wicked generation.

The same thing happens today when some speak of America. We claim that America is a post-Christian culture, that we are pagans, that we are immoral, that we murder our babies, etc. No one says that to mean that there is not one person that may be excepted from these indictments. It is a description of our society as a whole in general. That is all that Christ is doing. This over-wooden literalization sucks all of the life out of the Scriptures. Also Hebrews tells us how God was angry with the generation of the Israelites that distrusted Him to bring them into the Promised Land during the Exodus so they died in the wilderness. Obviously generation there is in the normal sense of the word since all wicked people of all time did not die during that period of time. And obviously it is possible to speak of a generation of people as wicked and still have exceptions since Caleb and Joshua did not die in the wilderness and were not wicked, yet were part of that generation.

Comparing other uses of "*this generation*" in the mouth of Christ also proves helpful. For example:

Luke 11:31-32: *The queen of the South will rise up in 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 indeed a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.*

Luke 17:25: *But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.*

An frank assessment of the texts makes it obvious to whom Jesus was referring. If this phrase was not present in a key eschatological context with embarrassing implication for futurism, this would never be an issue. It is an objection driven by a desire to force a "system" unto the text.

Also let's notice something that is implied in what Jesus said, He said that *"this generation will not pass away UNTIL all these things take place,"* which implies that after these things take place that generation WOULD pass away. Now this objection would not harm Tony's case as he is an amill historicist who would say that this event is concurrent with the destruction of the wicked who are the ones identified as *"this generation,"* thus will indeed pass away. However, for the dispensationalist, it would mean that Jesus is implying that the Jews as a race will pass away after the Great Tribulation - a conclusion their system could not tolerate. And lastly, for the historic premill, it would mean that this event marks the destruction of "children of the devil" (Tony's view) or the Jews neither of which can work in their system which still has "children of the devil" and presumably Jews still alive and kicking in the Millennium.

Now, on to the fatal flaw in the typical use of *"race"* by a dispensationalist in addition to the arguments above. A portion of the argument follows the same twist as Tony, i.e. the blood of all the prophets could be required of that one first century generation, and the argument above would apply, but there is another angle that defeats this explanation from a dispensationalist. To repeat, Matthew 23 is the record of Jesus' calling down seven woes upon the first century scribes and Pharisees. It is undeniably talking about them (using the personal pronoun "you" 26 times) NOT unbelieving Jews of all time. Beginning in verse 31 it gets really personal with Jesus telling them that they are witnesses against themselves that they are sons of their murderous "fathers." Jesus then tells them to "Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt." (verse 32) Note that phrase very carefully. Jesus declares THEM guilty of their father's crimes which include the murder of all the righteous blood upon the earth. Because he has declared them guilty (and there is no doubt there that He is speaking of THEM), Jesus then lays to their charge the actual murders. In saying that "you murdered Zechariah" Jesus is restating what he already said. . . that they have filled up the measure of their father's guilt. Their father's guilt is theirs. Their father's crimes are theirs. This interpretation of generation as "race" lays the guilt of the ages upon unbelieving Jews of ALL TIME, instead of the unique generation that Jesus said would "fill up" those iniquities because the murder of Him would be the greatest of all crimes. It was THEM that filled up on the measure of their father's guilt, not my unbelieving Jewish next door neighbor Murray Goldstein.

In one debate I personally had, my dispensationalist opponent claimed some heavy gun support for the rendering of *"this generation"* as *"this race"* by insinuating that Greek scholar Thayer concurs. This error has been perpetrated in some dispensationalist circles by an erroneous reference to such support by Thayer in the Scofield Reference Bible. Thayer actually defines "genea" as *"the whole multitude of men living at the same time"* and cites Matthew 24:34 as an example of such!! [Th GEL 112]. Arndt and Gingrich concur and also cite Matthew 24:34 in support [Ar GEL]. The lexicons are overwhelming on my side as evidenced by the fact that NO major Bible version translates that verse as "race" in the text, and believe me, that is not because they are eager to throw preterists a bone.

Consider once again the utter inanity that this position puts in the mouth of Christ. The dispensationalist agrees that Jesus is prophesying concerning the Jewish people. And then in a dramatic statement opening with *"Most assuredly I say to you,"* what does Jesus say?? Drum roll please. *"The Jewish race will not pass away until all these things happen to the Jewish race."* Huh?? That is nonsense and is a complete tautological truism. Remember the disciples asked Jesus when would these things be. This view has Jesus completely ignoring their question and giving a prediction that even Benny Hinn could get right. Wait a minute, I'm feeling prophetic. . . . *"Most assuredly I say to TheologyWeb, TheologyWeb will remain online until it goes offline."* I never knew being a prophet was so easy. [Sch M24GT 57-58]

*This Paper proudly created on my Mac Pro, Dual-Core Intel Xeon 3 GHz.
Yes, I have drank the Jobs Kool-Aid.*