The question before us is simple: Does the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24; Mark 13; and Luke 21) describe signs that were fulfilled in (1) events leading up to and including the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, (2) a future generation, (3) a past generation and a future fulfillment (double fulfillment), or (4) a micro/macro fulfillment? Attempts to get around the clear language of Matthew 24:34 and the meaning of “this generation” are not exegetically viable.

I. A first-century fulfillment of the Olivet Discourse is not a novel interpretation.

A. Eusebius (c. 263–339), The Proof of the Gospel (Demonstratio evangelica).

1. Eusebius makes Israel’s rejection of Jesus and the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 a major apologetic theme in his Proof of the Gospel. For instance, he speaks “of the [OT] prophets, wailing and lamenting characteristically over the calamities which will overtake the Jewish people because of their impiety to Him Who had been foretold. How their kingdom, that had continued from the days of a remote ancestry to their own, would be utterly destroyed after their sin against Christ... how their royal metropolis would be burned with fire, their venerable and holy altar undergo...
the flames of extreme desolation. . . . And it is plan even to the blind, that what they
saw and foretold is fulfilled in actual facts from the very day the Jews laid godless
hands on Christ, and drew down on themselves the beginning of the train of
sorrows” (1:1 §7; cp. 1:6 §18; 2:3 §83).

2. Eusebius states of the OT prophecy of their “overthrow” (Amos 4:11): “This is
leveled at the Jewish race, and only received its fulfillment in their case, after their
plot against our Saviour. Their ancient holy place, at any rate, and their Temple are
to this day as much destroyed as Sodom” (5:23:250; cp. 6:1 §257; 6:7 §267).

3. He points out that Zechariah 14 “foretells a second siege of Jerusalem which is to
take place afterwards, which it suffered from the Romans, after its inhabitants had
carried through their outrage on our Saviour Jesus Christ” (6:18 §285; cp. 6:18 §286).
He speaks of “the ruin that should overtake them after the coming of our Saviour,
when, since they rejected the Christ of God…” (6:18 §291).

4. He also states “that the two chief signs of His presence [i.e., the Messiah’s coming in
the ministry of Jesus] would be the calling of the nations of the world to receive the
true knowledge of God, and the ruin and desolation of the Jews through their
unbelief in Him” (7 §308).

5. Eusebius interprets Micah 1:2–5, which speaks of “the Lord . . . coming forth from
His place” as referring to Jerusalem’s destruction in A.D. 70: “the rulers of the Jewish
people as well, and their kingdom that existed previously, their sacrificial system and
the seats of their teachers, here called Mountains metaphorically [Mic 1:2–5], are
said to be shaken by the Descent of the Lord from heaven. And who could deny that
this was fulfilled after the time of our Saviour Jesus Christ, when he sees all these things not only shaken, but abolished” (6:13 §271).

6. He also states “that the two chief signs of His presence [i.e., the Messiah’s coming in the ministry of Jesus] would be the calling of the nations of the world to receive the true knowledge of God, and the ruin and desolation of the Jews through their unbelief in Him” (7 §308).

7. Eusebius interprets Luke 12:49 as “the Coming of the Lord”: “One might also literally in another way connect fire and chariots with His coming, through the siege that attacked Jerusalem after our Saviour’s Advent, for the Temple was burned with fire not long after, and was reduced to extreme desolation, and the city was encircled by the chariots and camps of the enemy” (6:25 §306).

8. On the abomination of desolation, Eusebius writes: “And from that time a succession of all kinds of troubles afflicted the whole nation and their city until the last war against them, and the final siege, in which destruction rushed on them like a flood [Dan. 9:26] with all kinds of misery of famine [Matt. 24:7], plague [Luke 21:21] and sword [Luke 21:24], and all who had conspired against the Saviour in their youth were cut off; then, too, the abomination of desolation stood in the Temple [Matt. 24:15], and it has remained there even till to-day, while they [i.e., the Jews] have daily reached deeper depths of desolation.”

9. “These words were said in a corner of the earth then, and only those present heard it. How, I ask, did they credit them unless from other divine works that He had done

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they had experienced the truth in His words? Not one of them disobeyed His command: but in obedience to His will according to their orders they began to make disciples of every race of men, going from their own country to all races, and in a short time it was possible to see His words realized. The Gospel, then, in a short time was preached in the whole world, for a witness to the heathen, and Barbarians and Greeks alike possessed the writings about Jesus in their ancestral script and language.3

B. The Didache (most likely written prior to A.D. 70). J. P. Audet writes that “it was composed, almost certainly in Antioch, between [AD] 50 and 70.”4

C. Clement of Rome: Of Paul Clement writes, “After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west.” Compare this statement to what Jesus says in Matthew 24:14: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.” In other places, Paul writes to the Romans that their “faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world” (Rom. 1:8). To the Colossians we learn that, according to Paul, “was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister” (Col. 1:23; cf. 1:6).

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D. Ireneaus, writing in *Against Heresies*: “The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith.” This gives support to the fulfillment of Matthew 24:14.

II. Older Bible Commentators from different denominational backgrounds have interpreted the Olivet Discourse as fulfilled prior to that first-century generation passing away: “I am aware that many of the best scholars, many of the most judicious, learned and reliable critics, both in our own country and in Europe, have entertained and with great ability defended the opinion that the whole of Matthew 24 which precedes v. 35 must refer exclusively to the judgments on the Jews in connection with their wars with the Romans from Vespasian to Hadrian.”

A. John Lightfoot (1602–1675): “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 Matt. xvi. 28, compare John xxi. 22. And there were some Rabbins alive at the time when Christ spoke these things, that lived until the city was destroyed.”

B. Henry Hammond (1605–1660): “I now assure you, that in the age of some that are now alive, shall all that has been said in this chapter be certainly fulfilled.”

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5 Calvin E. Stowe, “The Eschatology of Christ, With Special Reference to the Discourse in Matt, XXIV and XXV,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 7 (July 1850), 471.


C. John Gill (1697–1771): “This is a full and clear proof, that not any thing that is said before [v. 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.”

D. N. A. Nisbett (1787): “Nor can I agree with him when he says, that our blessed Lord knew very well that he should not come, while that generation, to whom he preached, was alive, and that all his Apostles knew this, as well as he; for this is expressly contrary to our Lord’s own assertion, in many parts of the gospels, that the Son of Man would come before that generation was wholly passed away.”

E. Philip Doddridge (1702–1751): “And verily I say unto you; and urge you to observe it, as absolutely necessary in order to understand what I have been saying, That this generation of men now living shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled, for what I have foretold concerning the destruction of the Jewish state is so near at hand, that some of you shall live to see it all accomplished with a dreadful exactness.”

F. Thomas Newton (1704–1782): “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

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any other distant event, when it is said so positively here in the conclusion, All these things shall be fulfilled in this generation.” ¹¹

G. Thomas Scott (1747–1821): “This absolutely restricts our primary interpretation of the prophecy to the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place within forty years.” ¹²

H. Adam Clarke (1762–1832): “[Matthew 24] 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; and witnessed by a writer [Flavius Josephus] who was present during the whole, who was himself a Jew, and is acknowledged to be an historian of indisputable veracity in all those transactions which concern the destruction of Jerusalem. Without having designed it, he has written a commentary on our Lord’s words, and shown how every tittle was punctually fulfilled, though he knew nothing of the Scripture which contained this remarkable prophecy. His account will be frequently referred to in the course of these notes; as also the admirable work of Bishop Newton on the prophecies.” ¹³


¹³ http://www.studylight.org/com/acc/view.cgi?book=mt&chapter=024. Clarke writes the following in his commentary on 1 Peter 4:7: “Peter says, The end of all things is at hand; and this he spoke when God had determined to destroy the Jewish people and their polity by one of the most signal judgments that ever fell upon any nation or people. In a very few years after St. Peter wrote this epistle, even taking it at the lowest computation, viz., A. D. 60 or 61, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. To this destruction, which was literally
III. Contemporary Commentators on the interpretation of “this generation.”

A. Marcellus Kik’s exposition of Matthew 24 first published in 1948.  

B. Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida: “[T]he 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 sense other than its normal one: in Mark (elsewhere in 8:12, 9:19) the word always has this meaning.”  

C. William Lane: “The significance of the temporal reference has been debated, but in Mark ‘this generation’ clearly designates the contemporaries of Jesus (see on Chs. 8:12, 38; 9:19) and there is no consideration from the context which lends 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.”  

D. D. A. Carson: “[This generation] can only with the greatest difficulty be made to mean anything other than the generation living when Jesus spoke.”  

E. John Nolland: “Matthew uses genea here for the tenth time. Though his use of the term has a range of emphases, it consistently refers to (the time span of) a single human

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generation. All the alternative senses proposed here [in 24:34] (the Jewish people; humanity; the generation of the end-time signs; wicked people) are artificial and based on the need to protect Jesus from error. ‘This generation’ is the generation of Jesus’ contemporaries.”  

F. William Sanford LaSor: “If ‘this generation’ is taken literally, all of the predictions were to take place within the life-span of those living at that time.”

G. G. R. Beasley-Murray: “The meaning of ‘this generation’ is now generally acknowledged. . . . For Mark the eschatological discourse expounds the implication of the prophecy of judgment in verse 2, and so implies the perversity of ‘this generation,’ which must suffer the doom predicted. . . . This generation is not to pass away until ‘all these things happen’ (tauta panta genetai). The first term, tauta, appeared previously in verse 29: ‘When you see these things happening...’ A clearer precedent for tauta panta, however, appears in the question of the disciples in verse 4: ‘When will all these things be, and what is the sign when all these things will be completed?’ The response to the request for a sign has been given, above all in verses 14–15; the question concerning the ‘when’ is answered in verse 30. In view of Mark’s setting of the statement, however, it is difficult to exclude from ‘all these things’ the description of the parousia in verses 24–27.”

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20 Mark 13 (.), 333–334.
H. Jack P. Lewis: “The meaning of generation (genea) is crucial to the interpretation of the entire chapter. While Scofield, following Jerome, contended that it meant the Jewish race, there is only one possible case in the New Testament (Luke 16:8) where the lexicon suggests that genea means race.\textsuperscript{21} There is a distinction between genos (race) and genea (generation). Others have argued that genea means the final generation; that is, once the signs have started, all these happenings would transpire in one generation (cf. 23:36). But elsewhere in Matthew genea means the people alive at one time and usually at the time of Jesus (1:17; 11:16; 12:39,41,45; 23:36; Mark 8:38; Luke 11:50f.; 17:25), and it doubtlessly means the same here.”\textsuperscript{22}

I. “Christ’s use of the words ‘immediately after’ [in Matthew 24:30] does not leave room for a long delay (2,000 years or more before his literal second coming occurs), neither does the explicit time-scale given in Matthew 24:34. The word ‘parousia’ does not occur in this section but is prominently reintroduced in the new paragraph which begins at Matthew 24:36, where its unknown time is contrasted with the clear statement that the events of this paragraph will take place within ‘this generation’ (Matthew 24:36). This section is therefore in direct continuity with what has gone before, the account of the siege of Jerusalem. Here we reach its climax.” (P. 936) “The language ... is drawn from Daniel 7:13–14, which points to the vindication and enthronement of Jesus (rather than his second coming [‘parousia’]). ... In this context, therefore, this poetic language appropriately refers to the great changes which were about to take place in the world.

\textsuperscript{21} The New American Standard translates genea in Luke 16:8 as “kind,” but “generation” is equally valid.

when Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed. It speaks of the ‘Son of Man’ entering into his kingship, and ‘his angels’ gathering in his new people from all the earth. The fall of the temple is thus presented, in highly allusive language, as the end of the old order, to be replaced by the new regime of Jesus, the Son of Man, and the international growth of his church, the new people of God. . . . The NIV margin offers ‘race’ as an alternative to ‘generation.’ This suggestion is prompted more by embarrassment on the part of those who think Matthew 24:30 refers to the ‘parousia’ (second coming) rather than by any natural sense of the word ‘genea’!”

J. F. F. Bruce: “The phrase ‘this generation’ is found too often on Jesus’ lips in this literal sense for us to suppose that it suddenly takes on a different meaning in the saying we are now examining. Moreover, if the generation of the end-time had been intended, ‘that generation’ would have been a more natural way of referring to it than ‘this generation.”

K. R. T. France: “‘This generation’ has been used frequently in this gospel for Jesus’ contemporaries, especially in a context of God’s impending judgment; see 11:16; 12:39, 41–42, 45; 16:4; 17:17, and especially 23:36, where God’s judgment on ‘this generation’ leads up to Jesus’ first prediction of the devastation of the temple in 23:38. It may safely be concluded that if it had not been for the embarrassment caused by supposing that Jesus was here talking about his parousia, no one would have thought of suggesting any other meaning for ‘this generation,’ such as ‘the Jewish race’ or ‘human beings in

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24 F. F. Bruce, The Hard Sayings of Jesus (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 227
`L. Paul Copan: “In these passages, the ‘coming’ (the Greek verb is erchomai = “[I] come”) is expected within Jesus’ own ‘adulterous and sinful generation.’ Something dramatic will apparently take place in the near future.”

Background to the Olivet Discourse

The context for the Olivet Discourse is found in the Matthew 23 when Jesus spoke to the “multitudes and to His disciples” (Matt. 23:1) that included the scribes and Pharisees (23:13) regarding the future of Jerusalem (23:37) and the desolation of the temple (23:38). Jesus was in the temple when He declared that their “house” was going to be left to them “desolate” (23:38). This word about the temple’s desolation leads Jesus’ disciples “to point out the temple buildings to Him” (Matt. 24:1). But before this Jesus made a statement that many believe is a promise that one day in the distant future Israel will embrace Jesus as the Messiah. How Jesus meant “until” makes all the difference in how this verse is interpreted.

Matthew 23:39: “For I say to you, from now on you shall not see Me until you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”

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Barry Horner states: Gary DeMar “references three uses in Matthew of the Greek adverb, ἕως, 
heōs, meaning ‘until’ (5:26; 18:30; 18:34) that do express contingency, especially because all 
three instances describe human parabolic situations. Hence it is alleged that Matthew 23:39 is 
similarly meant to declare contingency, “until you say,” though maybe you will and maybe you 
won’t. However ἕως, heōs is used on sixteen additional times in Matthew, and none of these 
allow for conditional usage, and especially several, like 23:39, that are eschatological 
declarations (10:23; 16:28; 17:9; 22:44; 24:34, 39; 26:36).”

1. An action is required of Jesus’ present audience: “until you say” (see Acts 2:37–41). If a 
future generation was in view, Jesus could have made this particularly clear by saying 
“until they see.”

2. R. T. France argues, the word “For, with which the verse begins, unambiguously links it 
with God’s abandonment of his house in v. 38.”

3. “There is no prediction here, only a condition. Or, rather, the only prediction is an 
emphatic negative, ‘from now on you will certainly not see me,’ to which the following 
‘until’ clause provides the only possible exception. They will not see him again until they 
welcome him, but the indefinite phrasing of the second clause gives no assurance that 
such a welcome will ever be forthcoming.”

Eerdmans, 1990), 333.
4. “It is remarkable that so many interpreters can find a positive prediction in what is in fact an emphatically negative prediction.”

5. If their response was considered to be a certainty, Jesus would have said “when you say” (e.g., Matt. 2:8; 6:2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 17; 17:27; 24:15; 24:33, 44).

6. A certainly of a future audience of Jews embracing Jesus of the Messiah would read, “when they say.”

7. The use of “until” in Matthew 10:23; 16:28; 17:9; 22:44, which Horner claims is not being used conditionally, is based on the action of the Son of Man which is always a certainty.

8. In Matthew 24:39, the coming of the flood is not based on the actions of the people; its timing was set by God irrespective of what the people did.

9. Maybe they will and maybe they won’t. In these examples, the actions are conditional because the desired result is contingent on what people do or don’t do:

   a. “Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent” (Matt. 5:26).
b. “But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed” (Matt. 18:30).

c. “And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart” (Matt. 18:34–35).

10. Only those who say “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord” will see Jesus.

11. If the use of “until” is not conditional, does this mean that every Jew will say “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord”?

12. Based on the fact that according to dispensationalists, two-thirds of the Jews will be killed during the Great Tribulation, therefore, only a remnant will respond and be saved; therefore, the response is conditional.

13. With these considerations, the use of “until” is conditional based on how the people of Israel would respond. Some did, and some didn’t as events in Acts (see below) make clear.

14. This is not an everlasting disenfranchisement but the fulfillment of covenantal promises made centuries before through the prophets. The fulfillment begins at Pentecost, not some distant time in the future.

a. “Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5).

b. When those from “the house of Israel” heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’ And Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus
Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself.’ And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation!’” (Acts 2:37–40).

c. Not everyone repented: “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls (Acts 2:41).

d. “Moses said, ‘The Lord God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed in everything He says to you. And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. It is you who are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ For you first, God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways” (Acts 3:24–26).

e. “But many [not all] of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand” (Acts 4:4).

f. “And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets, and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on any one of them. And also the people from the
cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits; and they were all being healed” (Acts 5:14–16).

g. Notice the Jewish opposition (Acts 4:1–31; 5:17–18, 21, 27; 7:54–8:1). Obviously these Jews did not say “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,” but many others did.

h. “And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

i. “And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘Thou art My Son; today I have begotten Thee’” (Acts 13:32–33).

Matthew 24:1: “And Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him.”

1. In Matthew 23:38, Jesus told His audience that their “house” was going to be left to them “desolate.”

2. The disciples understood this to mean the temple.

3. There is nothing in this passage that implies that Jesus has a future temple in mind; it was the temple that was standing before them.
Matthew 24:2: “And He answered and said to them, ‘Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down.’”

1. Jesus predicts that the temple that was standing in His day would be torn down so that not a single stone would be left upon another.

2. There is no debate over whether this event happened. The temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Roman armies led by Titus, the son of Emperor Vespasian.

Matthew 24:3: “And as He was sitting 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 [parousia], and of the end of the age?’”

1. “End of the age” (aion) not the “end of the world” (kosmos), as the KJV translates it.

2. “Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor. 10:11).

3. “Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb. 9:26).

4. “Last days” refer to the last days of the old covenant: Acts 2:17; Heb. 9:26; Heb. 1:1–2; James 5:3, 8–9; 1 Peter 1:20; 1 Peter 4:7.

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For a lexical study of parousia, see below under Matthew 24:27.

And it shall be in the last days, ‘God says, ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.’” Thomas Ice must add a word to Acts 2:16 to make it fit his parenthesis eschatology. He rewrites the verse to read, “But this is [like] that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.” He tries to explain the addition of “like” this way: “The unique statement of Peter (‘this is that’) is in the language of comparison and similarity, not fulfillment.” (Ice, “Acts,” Prophecy Study Bible, ed. Tim LaHaye [Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000], 1187, note on Acts 2:16). He’s begging the question, assuming what he must first prove. Dispensational author Stanley D.
5. Parallel accounts
   a. “Tell us, when shall these things be?” (Matt. 24:3).
   b. “Tell us, when shall these things be . . . ?” (Mark 13:4).

6. Each account concludes with “this generation will not pass away until all these things take place” (Matt. 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32).

Matthew 24:4: “And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘See to it that no one misleads you.’”
   1. Jesus is warning His present audience. Notice the use of the second-person plural “you.”
   2. Is there any indication in this verse that Jesus is warning them about a distant generation or any generation but their own?
   3. The burden of proof is on the futurist to prove that a future audience is in view given the use of “you”; it is not on the preterist to prove a future generation is not in view given the use of “you.”

Matthew 24:5: “For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many.”
   1. In Greek, anti (as in “antichrist”) can have the meaning “in place of” as well as “against.”

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Toussaint writes, contradicting Ice on his point, “This clause does not mean, ‘This is like that’; it means Pentecost fulfilled what Joel had described.” (Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament, John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck [Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983], 358). After saying this, he goes on to argue: “However, the prophecies of Joel quoted in Acts 2:19–20 were not fulfilled.” So which is it? He says the fulfillment will come “if Israel would repent.” But the elect remnant of Israel did repent: “Now having heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’ And Peter said to them, ‘Repent. . .’” (2:37–38). The result? “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls” (2:41).
2. An anti-Christ could be someone who claims to be in the place of the real Messiah, of whom there were many in John’s day which was a sure indication that it was “the last hour” (1 John 2:18).

3. John may have been referring to messianic imposters (1 John 2:22; 4:3; 2 John 7).

4. Dispensationalist Larry Spargimino states that “false messiahs were not limited to the first century.”

   a. This means, according to him, there were false messiahs in the first century. Simon claimed to be called “the Great Power of God” (Acts 8:9–11).

   b. Alexander Keith, in his study of the first-century destruction of Jerusalem, wrote that “Dositheus, the Samaritan, pretended that he was the lawgiver prophesied of by Moses.”

   c. There were so many impostors preying on the gullibility of the people that under the procuratorship of Felix (Acts 23:24), “many of them were apprehended and killed every day. They seduced great numbers of the people still expecting the Messiah; and well therefore might our Saviour caution his disciples against them.”

   d. Simon claimed to be called “the Great Power of God” (Acts 8:9–11). Simon “had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts” (8:11) which certainly fall into the category of “great signs and wonders.” In Acts 13:6 we read about Elymus who is

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described as “a magician” and “a Jewish false prophet” who was working to turn people “away from the faith” (13:8). This sounds a lot like what Jesus said would happen in that generation: “as to mislead, if possible, even the elect” (Matt. 24:24).

e. Paul was thought to be “the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness” (Acts 21:38). This incident is reminiscent of Jesus’ words about those who claimed that He might be “in the wilderness” (Matt. 24:26).

f. Those who had rejected their Messiah at the “time of [their] visitation” (Luke 19:44), the same people who wanted to make Jesus king to overthrow the tyrants of Rome (John 6:15), were still looking for a political savior right up until the time of Jerusalem’s destruction.

5. Donald E. Green argues that “There is little historical evidence for false Christs appearing around the time of the Jewish war or for false Christs performing great miracles.” This may be true, but there is also “little historical evidence” outside the New Testament for the true Christ, that is, Jesus Christ. We should expect this since Jesus was a political and religious threat to the Roman Empire. Moreover, there are no extant documents from the first century in existence today. All we have are copies of

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late-dated documents from that era. Here is some of the extra-biblical material related to Jesus Christ

a. Josephus calls James “the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ.”

b. Suetonius makes one statement regarding “Chrestus.” “As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome.”

c. Tacitus writes that “Nero fastened the guilt of starting the blaze and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius 14–37 at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.”

Matthew 24:6: “And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.”

1. Wars and rumors of wars: “The Pax Romana (Roman Peace) was established under Augustus in 17 B.C.

2. Jesus and the apostles lived during the most peaceful period of the Roman Empire. The last major insurrection in Palestine occurred before Jesus was born in 7 B.C.
3. “In Rome itself, four emperors came to a violent death in the short space of eighteen months. Were one to give account of all the disturbances that actually occurred within the Empire after Jesus’ death, he would be constrained to write a separate book.”

4. Wars and rumors of wars can only be signs in times of peace.

Matthew 24:7: “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.”

1. Famine
   b. Famine relief? (Rom. 15:25–28; 1 Cor. 16:1–5).
   c. “Suetonius (Claud. 18) speaks of assiduae sterilates [continual droughts]; and Tacitus (Ann. Xii. 43) of ‘frugum egestas, et orta ex eo fames’ [death of crops, and thence famine] about the same time. There was famine in Judæa in the reign of Claudius... mentioned by Josephus, Antt. iii. 15.3.”

2. Earthquakes
   a. “Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’” (Matt. 27:54).

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42 Kik, An Eschatology of Victory (1971), 92.
b. “And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it” (Matt. 28:2).

c. “[A]nd suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened” (Acts 16:26).

d. The major earthquakes that occurred after the Olivet Discourse but before the destruction of Jerusalem noted by historians are: Crete (A.D. 46 or 47), Rome (A.D. 51), Phrygia (A.D. 53), Laodicea (A.D. 60), Campania (A.D. 62 or 63), Pompeii (A.D. 63), and Judea (according to Josephus).44

e. There is no mention by Jesus of an increase or severity of earthquakes, just that there will be earthquakes in various places.

Matthew 24:8: “But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.”

1. Related to the time period stated by Jesus (“this generation”).

2. Matthew 24:34 governs the end point of events.

Matthew 24:9: “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all on account of My name.”

1. This period of tribulation, which affects believers, is different from the one described by Jesus in 24:22 which affects those who do not flee and thereby escape the coming judgment.

2. Notice the use of “you” (three times).

3. The first persecutions are recorded in Acts.
   a. Peter and John are arrested, placed in custody (Acts 4:3), commanded not to preach (4:18) and threatened by the Sanhedrin (4:21).
   b. The apostles are arrested, placed in prison (5:18) and commanded once again to stop teaching in Jesus’ name (5:28).
   c. The persecution escalates in Acts chapter 6 when Stephen is arrested and falsely accused of blasphemy (6:12–13). This results in Stephen’s murder (7:58–60).
   d. A “great persecution” is discussed in Acts 8. It is so severe that the Jerusalem church is scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.
   e. In this persecution both men and women are dragged from their homes, placed in prison (Acts 8:1, 3; 9:1–2, 26:9–10) and put to death (26:10).
   f. Saul even attempted to force believers to blaspheme the Lord (Acts 26:11).
   g. In Acts 12 Herod begins to persecute the church “because he saw that it pleased the Jews” (vs. 3).
   h. Herod’s policy led to the murder of James (12:2) and the arrest of Peter (12:4–5).

5. Fortunately, God delivered the apostle by supernatural means (12:7ff.).
   i. At the instigation of unbelieving Jews, the mob at Lystra “stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead” (Acts 14:19).

4. Paul gives us a glimpse of his experience as an apostle to the Gentiles in 2 Corinthians 11:23–27: “Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonment, beaten times without number, often in danger of
death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, . . . dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.”

a. Paul speaks of the “present distress” (1 Cor. 7:26).

b. In 2 Thessalonians Paul writes about the suffering of believers “in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure” (1:4) and promises that God will “repay with tribulation those who trouble you” (1:6).

c. Paul tells Timothy (2 Tim. 3:10–12): “But you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord delivered me! And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

5. Peter describes a similar set of experiences.

a. “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you” (1 Pet. 4:12).

b. The Roman persecution, which was often sporadic and unorganized, became an official policy under Nero.

6. John writes of tribulation in his day.
a. “Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you” (1 John 3:13). Jesus had warned His disciples, “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you” (John 15:18).

b. John describes himself as a “fellow partaker in the tribulation” (Rev. 1:9).

7. Geoffrey Bromily writes: “A drastic change came in July of A.D., 64, when Nero accused of setting a disastrous fire in Rome and unable to clear himself by gifts or sacrifices, decided to make the Christians scapegoats, and started a persecution which for its cruelty would evoke censure even from those who regarded Christianity as a debased superstition (Tacitus Ann. xv. 44). References to this persecution may perhaps be found in 1 Peter, and also in 2 Timothy, in which Paul mentions his trial and impending death. 1 Clem. 1:1 also refers to the martyrdom of Peter and Paul at this time, and Eusebius (HE ii.25.5ff.) adds that Peter suffered death by crucifixion and Paul by beheading. If Revelation belongs to the age of Nero, the persecution extended to Asia Minor, for the opening letters mention pressures and martyrdoms (2:2, 10, 13, 19; 3:8), and the author himself suffered exile for the word of God and the witness of Christ (1:9).”

Matthew 24:10: “And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another.”

1. Jesus warned earlier of a coming falling away (Matt. 10:21–22, 36). Speaking to His disciples, Jesus says: “But whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next; for

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truly I say to you, you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes” (10:23; cp. 16:27–28; 24:30).

2. Savage wolves: “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:29–30).

3. False teachers.

   a. “As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith” (1 Tim. 1:3–4).

   b. “Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered over to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:19–20).

   c. “If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain” (1 Tim. 6:3–5).

   d. “O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called ‘knowledge’—which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith. Grace be with you” (1 Tim. 6:20–21).
e. “But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and thus they upset the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:16–18).

f. “All who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes” (2 Tim. 1:15).

g. Demas, who was said to have “loved this present world,” deserted Paul (2 Tim. 4:10).

h. “At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them” (2 Tim. 4:16). There were also Judaizers who were constantly distorting Jesus’ message and preaching doctrines that opposed “the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:6–10).

i. “They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us” (1 John 2:19).

j. Paul, writing about his own generation, said, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1).

Matthew 24:11: “And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many.”

1. “And when they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus” (Acts 13:6).
2. “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:13–14).

3. “I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren” (2 Cor. 11:26).

4. “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

5. “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves” (2 Peter 2:1–3).

Matthew 24:12: “And because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.”

1. There were problems with homosexuality (Rom. 1:26–31), incest (1 Cor. 5:1), prostitution (1 Cor. 6:15–16), and fornication (1 Cor. 5:1, 11; Rev. 2:20).

2. General unrighteousness (1 Cor. 6:9–11; 1 Tim. 1:8–11).

3. Secular history (e.g., Caligula and Nero).

Matthew 24:13: “But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.”

1. The “end” is a reference to the “end of the age” (Matt. 24:3).

2. Saved eternally (Matt. 24:24)?
3. Saved from the tribulation (Matt. 24:22)? “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city” (Luke 21:20–21 and Matt. 24:16–20).

4. John Gill writes: “[T]he same shall be saved; with a temporal salvation, when Jerusalem, and the unbelieving inhabitants of it shall be destroyed: for those that believed in Christ, many of them, through persecution, were obliged to remove from thence; and others, by a voice from heaven, were bid to go out of it, as they did; and removed to Pella, a village a little beyond the Jordan, and so were preserved from the general calamity; and also with an everlasting salvation, which is the case of all that persevere to the end, as all true believers in Christ will.”

Matthew 24:14: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world [oikoumene] for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.”

1. The Greek word oikoumene is used and not kosmos, and yet it is most often translated as “world” (e.g., KJV, NASV, NIV, ESV).

2. It’s interesting that J. N. Darby’s translation translates oikoumene as “the whole habitable earth.” This is more correct than “world.”

3. The only time Matthew uses oikoumene.

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47 For a comprehensive study of how oikoumene is used in the New Testament, see Gary DeMar, “The Gospel Preached to All the World Oikoumene in Biblical Context.”
4. *Oikoumene* is used in Luke 2:1 for the geographical limits of the Roman Empire’s taxing authority. The translation often given is “Roman Empire” or “inhabited earth.”

5. *Oikoumene* is also used in Acts 11:28 to indicate that the famine was an Empire-wide event.

6. J. A. Alexander writes in his comments on Acts 11:28 where *oikoumene* is also used and often translated as “world”: *Throughout all the world*, literally *on (or over) the whole inhabited (earth)*. This phrase, though strictly universal in its import, is often used in a restricted sense. The Greeks, in their particular pride of race, applied it to their own country; the Romans, in like manner, to the empire. . . . [The] famine came upon the whole empire (or the whole known world.”


a. “Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and marveled, saying, ‘Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ‘And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God’” (Acts 2:5–11).

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b. “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world [kosmos]” (Rom. 1:8). Even if Jesus had used kosmos in Matthew 24:14, Romans 1:18 would have fulfilled it.

c. “But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; ‘Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world’” (Rom. 10:18).

d. “[T]he gospel, which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth” (Col. 1:5–6).

e. “[I]f indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister” (Col. 1:23).

8. “All the nations.”

a. “Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith” (Rom. 16:25–26).

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49 Dispensationalist Norman Geisler writes: “to every creature under heaven. This is obviously a figure of speech indicating the universality of the gospel and its proclamation, not that every person on the globe heard Paul preach. In Acts 2:5 this phrase describes countries without including, for example, anyone from North or South America (cf. Also Gen. 41:57; 1 Kings 10:24; Rom. 1:8).” (Norman L. Geisler, “Colossians,” in The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament (An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty), John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds. [Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983], 675).
b. “And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, beheld by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory” (1 Tim. 3:16).

Matthew 24:15: “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand).”

1. Futurists need a rebuilt temple in order for this passage to be fulfilled. There is not a single passage anywhere in the New Testament that says anything about a rebuilt temple.

2. Notice the audience reference: “when you see.”

3. Luke describes this event differently: “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand” (21:20). He seems to be describing an event as a prelude to the actual abomination.

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51 The “holy place” may signify an area larger than the “holy of holies.” The Bible often refers to Jerusalem as a holy place (Neh. 11:1, 18; Isa. 48:2; 52:1; 66:20; Dan. 9:16, 24; Joel 3:17). Israel itself is called the “holy land” (Zech. 2:12). “Daniel 9:25 even calls Jerusalem ‘the holy city’ (whereas Matthew speaks of ‘the holy place.’”) (Kenneth L. Gentry, Perilous Times: A Study of Eschatological Evil [Texarkana, AR: Covenant Media Foundation, 1999], 60).

52 To a large extent the problems that confront anyone who tries to explain Matthew’s or Mark’s parallel accounts, with their highly symbolic language...are absent from Luke’s account. The latter could almost be called a commentary on that of Matthew and Mark.” (William Hendriksen, The Gospel of Luke [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1978], 937).

53 The Roman general (Cestius Gallus) and his armies fled the area for a time. William Whiston (the translator of Josephus) writes in a note: “...there may be another very important, and very providential reason be here assigned for this strange and foolish retreat of Cestius; which, if Josephus had been now a Christian, he might probably have taken notice of also; and that is, the affording the Jewish Christians in the city an opportunity of calling to mind the prediction and caution given them by Christ about thirty-three years and half before, that ‘when they should see the abomination of desolation’ (The idolatrous Roman armies, with the images of their idols in their ensigns, ready to lay Jerusalem desolate,) ‘stand where it ought not;’ or, ‘in the holy place,’ or, ‘when they should see Jerusalem encompassed with armies,’ they should then ‘flee to the mountains.’ By complying with which those Jewish Christians fled to the mountain of Perea, and escaped this destruction.”
4. Mark describes the event more generally: “But when you see the abomination of
desolation standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those
who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Mark 13:14).

5. Roman desecration.
   a. Offering sacrifices: “And now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditious into the
city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings lying
round about it, brought their ensigns to the temple and set them over against its
eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make
Titus Imperator, with the greatest acclamations of joy. And now all the soldiers had
such vast quantities of the spoils which they had gotten by plunder, that in Syria a
pound weight of gold was sold for half its former value.”
   b. Trampling the temple holy places.

   a. The Jews had turned the temple into a “robber’s den” in Jesus’ day (Matt. 21:13).
      Why should it surprise us that they would continue to desecrate the temple?
   b. Temple functions were being abused (Matt. 23:2–3).
   c. There was a great deal of blood-letting going on in the temple area. The Sicarii (first-
century Jewish terrorists) instituted their own high priests, made a military fortress
out of the Temple, brought Idumeans into the Temple, and covered the Temple and
the altars with dead bodies.

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54 Josephus, The War of the Jews,” Book VI, Chapter VI, Section 1 (Partial).
d. Jesus told the “scribes and Pharisees,” “Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! (Matt. 23:38).

i. The temple is now “your house.”

ii. The Romans didn’t do anything to the temple to make it an abomination; it was something the Jews did.

iii. “Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and 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 upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation” (Matt. 23:34–36).

e. Jesus leaves the temple: “And Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him” (Matt. 24:1).

i. The Shekinah Glory departs.

ii. Golden Calf (Ex. 32).

iii. Eli’s two sons (1 Sam. 2–4).

iv. “Yet you will see far greater abominations” (Ezekiel 8–11). The glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple” (10:18).

7. “Others have argued, especially in light of Luke 21:20 and Daniel’s words, that either the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 or the desecration of the temple at that time,
whether by the apostate Jews beforehand or the Romans afterward, fulfilled Jesus’ prophetic words.”

Matthew 24:16: “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”

1. A change in audience: from “you” to “those.”
2. Christians who followed Jesus’ instructions knew of this prophecy and would have responded before unbelievers.
3. The judgment is local. To escape the onslaught, all one needed to do was flee to the mountains surrounding Jerusalem. If Jesus had been describing a worldwide conflagration, there wouldn’t have been any place to hide.

Matthew 24:17–21: “let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.”

1. These verses reinforce the local nature of the tribulation.
2. The houses have flat roofs (Matt. 24:17; Mark 13:15). Flat-roofed houses were common in first-century Israel (Mark 2:4; Acts 10:9).
3. The people are told to pray that their escape does not occur on the Sabbath or in the winter (Matt. 24:20). First-century Israel had and enforced strict Sabbath laws. The

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56“The Abomination that Causes Desolation,” *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*
extra-biblical law defined a “Sabbath day’s journey” (Acts 1:12). This hardly applies to today’s world or even to modern-day Israel.

4. The concern about travel would be significant for those on foot or using a beast of burden.

5. These first-century descriptions cannot apply to a modern military force that would use helicopters, tanks, jets, shoulder-fired missiles, HUMVs, and armored personnel carriers.

6. The account in Luke describes an ancient method of laying siege to a city that would not be used in modern warfare. “For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another [Matt. 24:2], because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.” (Luke 19:43–44). Josephus documents this method of siege warfare.


8. Mark describes a time when synagogues were places of worship (13:9)

Matthew 24:21: “for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall.”

1. Jesus tells us in Matthew 24:34 that “This generation will not pass away until ALL⁵⁷ THESE THINGS take place.”

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⁵⁷The use of “all” can have the meaning of “all without distinction” and not “all without exception” as in “the end of all things is at hand” (1 Pet. 4:7). The use of “these,” however, does specify all the things listed by Jesus.
2. Luke describes the time as one of “great distress” as being “upon the land,” that is, the land of Israel, “and wrath to this people, and they will fall by the edge of the sword” (Luke 21:23–24).
   a. The use of “swords” makes it an ancient battle. All a person had to do to escape the impending tribulation was to leave the city and head for the mountains.
   b. The boundary of this particular “great tribulation” or “great distress” did not extend beyond the city limits of Jerusalem.
   c. “Great tribulation” is not a term that by definition refers to a worldwide event. The famine in Egypt and the land of Canaan is described by Stephen as a “great tribulation” *(thlipsis megalē)* (Acts 7:11).

3. The phrase is most likely an example of hyperbole, a “rhetorical superlative.”
   a. There were Jews from “every nation under heaven” living in Jerusalem (Acts 2:5).
      From every single nation in the entire world?
   b. The gospel had been preached “in all creation under heaven” (Col. 1:23). Did this include China, India, Japan, the Hawaiian Islands, the Americas, all in the first century?
   c. “Thus He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem” (Dan. 9:12). The flood was a worldwide event.
d. “And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued” (Dan. 12:1).

e. In Daniel 9:12, we are told that the judgment upon Judea was the greatest calamity that had ever been done to Jerusalem.

f. “Moreover, there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been before and such as shall never be again” (Ex. 11:6; cf. 9:18; 10:14). What about the dispensationalist’s version of the Great Tribulation?

4. The phrase was used to describe the destruction of the first temple: “And because of all your abominations, I will do among you what I have not done, and the like of which I will never do again” (Ezek. 5:9).

a. It was done again in A.D. 70.

b. According to dispensationalists, it will be done again during their version of the Great Tribulation.

Matthew 24:22: “And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short.”

1. Some commentators claim that the use of “all flesh” must be a reference to the whole world as we know it today.
2. “[A]ccording to the context,” William Lane writes, “pasa sarx (‘all flesh’) . . . must be understood of Judea and Jerusalem. Cf. Jer. 12:12 where a similar expression designates the inhabitants of Judea.”

3. In other contexts, “all flesh” does not always mean every person without exception, that is, everybody alive in the entire world.
   a. “But this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel, . . . ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh’” (Acts 2:16–17). The context makes it clear that “all flesh” is a reference to all types of people: sons and daughters, young men and old men, and bond slaves, both men and women. Not everyone without exception, but everyone without distinction, Jews as well as Gentiles.
   b. “All mankind’ seems to be defined by what follows: old and young, women as well as men.” Every person in the world was not present at Pentecost and yet the language seems universal.

4. The Old Testament also uses “all flesh” in terms of limited geography: “On all the bare heights in the wilderness destroyers have come, for the sword of the LORD is devouring from one end of the land/earth [eretz] even to the other; there is no peace for anyone [lit., all flesh]” (Jer. 12:12). “All flesh” is limited by the context to all flesh in the land of Judah . . . the whole sinful population of Judah.”
   a. In addition to Jeremiah 12:12, Isaiah 66:16 is a statement of a localized judgment:

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58 William L. Lane, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans,, 1974), 471 n. 82.
b. “All flesh is here not to be taken in a universal sense, as, for example, [James D.] Smart does, but is defined by the following verse. It stands for those of the Jewish nation, the great majority, who have abandoned the Lord for the service of idols. The verse pictures the judgment to fall upon the Jewish nation at the time of Christ, with all the actual tragic consequences of that judgment in the sufferings that befell the Jews until the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. It is this of which our Lord speaks in Matthew 24:22 (not His usage of the words pasa sarx, all flesh).”

c. After dismissing interpretations that apply Isaiah 66:16 to “the battle of Armageddon,” J. A. Alexander argues that “the Apocalyptic prophecies are exegetical of those in the Old Testament, from which their images and terms are borrowed.—A much surer clue to the primary application of the one before us is afforded by our Saviour’s words in Matt xxiv. 22, where in speaking of the speedy destruction of Jerusalem he says, that excepting the elect no flesh should be saved, i.e. no portion of the Jewish race but those who were ordained to everlasting life through faith in him.”

5. Contrary to Stanley Toussaint’s claim that “‘All flesh’ describes all humanity” and that “the Tribulation described in Matthew 24:21 is of such huge proportions that human life stands in jeopardy on planet earth,” it is better to read “all flesh” in the context of Matthew 24 to mean nothing more than those living in Judea at the time of the sack of

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Jerusalem, “presumably meaning specifically those caught up in the *thlipsis* [tribulation] of v. 19.”\(^{63}\)

6. If “no life would have been saved” referred to the whole world, then why does Jesus designate the mountains surrounding Jerusalem as a place of safety? (Matt. 24:16). This is hardly a description of a world-wide tribulation if going to the mountains outside Jerusalem allows refugees to escape the coming conflagration.

7. Dispensationalists do not hold that the “all Israel” of Romans 11:26 refers to every Jew who has ever lived.

Matthew 24:23–26: “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There He is,’ do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance. If therefore they say to you, ‘Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go forth, or, ‘Behold, He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe them.”

1. This warning refers to a period just before the actual destruction of the temple.

2. Josephus writes: “A false prophet was the occasion of these people’s destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance. Now, there was then a great number of false prophets suborned by the

tyrants to impose upon the people, who denounced this to them, that they should wait for deliverance from God."\textsuperscript{64}

3. “[F]or one Jonathan, a vile person, and by trade a weaver, came thither and prevailed with no small number of the poorer sort to give ear to him; he also led them into the desert, upon promising them that he would show them signs and apparitions. . . .[O]f these many were slain in the fight, but some were taken alive, and brought to Catullus.”\textsuperscript{65}

4. Like false prophets who gave the people an artificial sense of security during the Babylonian invasion (Jer. 5:2–6; 6:14; 8:11: 29:9), there were false prophets during this period of great tribulation.

Matthew 24:27: “For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming \textit{parousia} of the Son of Man be.”

1. The meaning of \textit{Parousia}.\textsuperscript{66}


b. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, \textit{A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature}, 4\textsuperscript{th} ed. (Chicago: The University of

\textsuperscript{64}Josephus, \textit{Wars of the Jews},” Book VI, Chapter V, Section 2.

\textsuperscript{65}Flavius Josephus, \textit{The Wars Of The Jews}, 7:11:10.

\textsuperscript{66}The material that follows is taken from www.christsecondpresence.com/Signs/signs_parousia.htm
1. “Parousia”—1. Presence...the proofs of his presence.

2. Coming, advent as the first stage in presence.


d. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) V3, p. 664, c1. The basic meaning of *parousia* is “presence.” . . . In Greek, “presence” has an exact equivalent in παρουσία, *parousía*, but this word is rendered “presence” only in 2 Co. 10:10; Phi. 2:12; the Revised Version (British and American); Phi. 1:26 (the King James Version “coming”). Elsewhere *parousia* is rendered “coming,” but always with “presence” in the margin. Otherwise in the New Testament “presence” represents no particular word but is introduced where it seems to suit the context (compare e.g. Act 3:13 the King James Version and Act 3:19). See PAROUSIA.

e. “Parousia” (*parousia*), a word fairly common in Greek, with the meaning “presence” (2 Co. 10:10; Phi. 2:12). More especially it may mean “presence after absence,” “arrival” (but not “return,” unless this is given by the context), as in 1 Co. 16:17; 2 Co. 7:6, 2 Co. 7:7; Phi. 1:26.

Presence (with certain effects following)...and arrival, someone coming in order to be present.


k. *The Complete Biblical Library—The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary* (Springfield, MO: The Complete Biblical Library, 1991) Pi-Rho, p. 101, c1, #3814. “Parousia”—Presence, coming, advent, arrival. Classical Gk. from verb pareimi #3780, compound of #3706 para “beside” and #1498 eimi “I am.” Means “presence.” Also, denotes the “arrival” of someone or something. In the papyri, for example, a woman writes that her “presence” (parousia) is necessary in order to take care of certain financial concerns.... New Testament Usage. Paul...illustrated this same understanding when he contrasted his presence (parousia) with his absence (apousia [#660]). Personal presence...


p. Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright, eds., *New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1988) p. 299, c2. “Parousia”—The word means “presence” or “arrival,” and was used of visits of gods and rulers.

q. David Noel Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992) V5, p. 166, c1. The Greek word *parousia* is used in the New Testament to speak of the arrival or presence of someone. It is also used as a technical term to speak of the arrival or presence of Christ in glory...

r. David Noel Freedman, ed., *Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) p. 1009, c2. “Parousia”—A Greek noun used of persons or things, meaning “arrival” or active “presence” (from the verb *páreimi*, “to be present”).


u. William H. Gentry, ed., *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion* (Nashville: Abington, 1973). “Parousia”—The Greek term parousia, literally “presence” or “arrival,” used in first century literature of the visit of an important dignitary to a city or land...


x. Wilbert Francis Howard and James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920) V2, p. 320. “Parousia”—παρουσία, in which the RV marginal note (Gr. “Presence”) would suggest that the idea of “motion towards” is to be excluded; outside evidence for the technical meaning “royal visit” shows that advent is as literal a rendering as presence, which occurs in some places.


Note, many ancient Greek writings are cited for these conclusions.

dd. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988) p. 726, 85.25. “Parousia”—The presence of an object at a particular place—“presence, being at hand, to be in person.” 2 Cor. 10:10, when he is with us in person (literally “…his bodily presence”).


hh. James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), Foreword. “Parousia,” as applied to the return of the Lord, is simply the anglicizing of the Greek word which literally means “presence.”


kk. Charles F. Pfeiffer, John Rea, and Howard F. Vos, eds., *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975) V2, p. 1392, c1. “Parousia”—...Gr. Parousia in certain cases conveys the idea of presence (II Cor. 10:10; Phil 2:12). ...The word parousia as an eschatological term signifies the moment of arrival of the returning Christ plus His subsequent presence with His redeemed people.


mm. Harry Rimmer, *The Coming King* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941). Harry Rimmer (D.D., Sc.D.), who was styled “Fundamentalism’s outstanding spokesman” until his death, admitted that the word parousia meant personal presence. In his book, *The
Coming King, he observed that the Greek word parousia is used 13 times in describing the return of Christ and not once does it have the thought of “coming.”


pp. Merrill C. Tenny, ed., *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975) p. 601, c1. The noun parousia (παρουσία) which occurs twenty-four times in the New Testament, is a compound form composed of the preposition παρά “along side, beside” and the substantival form of the very είμι, “to be.” It basically means “being along side of” and conveys the sense of the English word “presence.” It is used in the New Testament of a person’s presence as

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67“In this edition the word parousia is uniformly rendered ‘presence’ (‘coming,’ as a representative of this word, being set aside). The original term occurs twenty-four times in the New Testament, viz.: Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Corinthians 15:23; 16:17; 2 Corinthians 7:6, 7; 10:10; Philippians 1:26; 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:3; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 8, 9; James 5:7, 8; 2 Peter 1:16; 3:4, 12; and 1 John 2:28. The sense of ‘presence’ is so plainly shown by the contrast with ‘absence’ (implied in 2 Corinthians 10:10, and expressed in Philippians 2:12) that the question naturally arises, Why not always so render it? The more so, inasmuch as there is in 2 Peter 1:16 also, a peculiar fitness in our English word ‘presence.’ This passage, it will be remembered, relates to our Lord’s transformation upon the Mount. The wonderful manifestation there made was a display and sample of ‘presence’ rather than of ‘coming.’ The Lord was already there; and, being there, he was transformed (compare Matthew 17:2, footnote) and the ‘majesty’ of his glorified person was then disclosed. His bodily ‘presence’ was one which implied and exerted ‘power;’ so that ‘power and presence’ go excellently well together—the ‘power’ befitting such a one and the same moment witnesses of both. The difficulty expressed in the notes to the second edition of this New Testament in the way of so yielding to this weight of evidence as to render parousia always by ‘presence,’ lay in the seeming incongruity of regarding ‘presence’ as an event which would happen at a particular time and which would fall into rank as one of a series of events, as 1 Corinthians 15:23 especially appeared to require. The translator still feels the force of this objection, but is withdrawn from taking his stand upon it any longer by the reflection that, after all, the difficulty may be imaginary. The parousia, in any case, is still in the future, and may therefore be enshrouded in a measure of obscurity which only fulfillment can clear away: it may, in fine, be both a period—more or less extended during which certain things shall happen—and an event, coming on and passing away as one of a series of divine interpositions. Christ is raised as a firstfruit—that is one event; He returns and vouchsafes his ‘presence,’ during which he raises his own — that is another event, however large and prolonged; and finally comes another cluster of events constituting ‘the end.’ Hence, after all, ‘presence’ may be the most widely and permanently satisfying translation of the looked for parousia of the Son of Man.”
contrasted to his absence (Phil. 2:12). It contains the thought of the “coming” or “arrival” of a person as the first stage of his presence that is to follow.


The word *parousia*, never in the whole New Testament, signifies anything else than presence.


“Parousia”—Be at hand/present, presence; coming, arrival.

Christianity Today (a well-known evangelical magazine) published a series of essays on “Fundamentals of the Faith.” The essay in booklet form on “The Second Advent of Christ” had this to say about *parousia*: “...let us look at the Greek words used in the New Testament for the idea of the return. First of all, there is the word *parousia*, which means basically ‘presence.’"

Thomas L. Constable in his commentary on 2 Thessalonians in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* acknowledges that *parousias* has the meaning “presence,” although he identifies it with the rapture.

2. Jesus is using judgment language (“like lightning”) that is common in the Old Testament, to describe His presence/coming that will result in the destruction of the temple and the judgment on Jerusalem.

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69. “This presence, I remark further, I understand to be a literal one. The expression, ‘Christ’s literal presence, or coming,’ is often taken as meaning nothing less than a material and visible one, so that the denial of such a coming is thought to be a rejection of the doctrine of his literal coming. This is wholly unwarranted. It might as well be said..."

b. Lightning is associated with violent destruction and terror as God uses Babylon to deliver His judgment (Ezek. 21:10, 15, 28). Notice the parallels with the Olivet Discourse:

i. “Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, and speak against the sanctuaries, and prophesy against the land of Israel” (21:1)


iii. Sword, like lightning, is being used as a metaphor for judgment.

c. Lightning is associated with the sword and arrow in local judgments (2 Sam. 22:15; Ps. 18:14; 144:6)

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that to deny that God is a material and visible being is to deny his literal existence. The Parousia is a literal presence, as truly as when Christ says, ‘Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them’ [Matt. 18:20]. It is not a figurative one, not one existing constructively or as an object of thought, but a true, actual presence, as real, though not under the same conditions, as when he was here in the flesh. It is also a personal Presence. The same unwarranted restriction of meaning is often given to this phrase, as if Christ could not be personally present unless subject to the senses of sight and touch. How often after his resurrection did he render himself invisible to his disciples while he was with them. By a personal presence I mean that Christ is here himself in propria persona [in one’s own proper person], not merely by the official work of the Spirit, nor by any representative whatever.” (Israel P. Warren, The Parousia: A Critical Study of the Scripture Doctrines of Christ’s Second Coming; His Reign as King; the Resurrection of the Dead; and the General Judgment, 2nd ed. (Portland, ME: Hoyt, Fogg & Donham, (1879) 1884)).

3. Lightning is a local phenomenon.
   a. Of the 30 occurrences of the word “lightning” in the Bible, not one of them describes a global event.\(^\text{71}\)
   
   b. John MacArthur argues that “Christ promised that His coming would be obvious to all: ‘As the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be’ (Matthew 24:27 NKJV).”\(^\text{72}\)
   
   c. Thomas Ice offers a similar interpretation: “Matthew 24:27, which says, ‘Just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be,’ emphasizes a global coming.”\(^\text{73}\)
   
   d. Of course, lightning is not seen by everyone in the world when it strikes. When there’s a lightning storm in Sacramento, California, no one in Atlanta, Georgia, sees it. Our ability to see extends only from horizon to horizon.
   
   e. Contrary to MacArthur’s claim that “every person in every nation of the world will take note,”\(^\text{74}\) it’s clear that Jesus is describing a series of local events to be experienced by that first-century generation that could be escaped by heading to the mountains outside of Judea (Matt. 24:16).

Matthew 24:28: “Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.”

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\(^{71}\)Job 37:3 may be the exception if the Hebrew eretz refers to the “earth” rather than the “land.”


\(^{74}\)MacArthur, *The Coming of Christ*, 110
1. Being familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures, Jesus’ disciples would have understood what He was describing when He made reference to a corpse and vultures (or eagles).
   a. They would have recognized the words of Jeremiah that described a judgment of those who violate God’s covenant: “The dead bodies of this people will be food for the birds of the sky and for the beasts of the earth” (Jer. 7:33).
   b. Stated later in Jeremiah, “[God] will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hand of those who seek their life; and I will give over their carcasses as food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth” (19:7).

2. A similar image of judgment is found in Job 39:26–30: “Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up and makes his nest on high? On the cliff he dwells and lodges, upon the rocky crag, an inaccessible place. From there he spies out food; His eyes see it from afar. His young ones also suck up blood; and where the slain are, there is he.”

3. Josephus records that more than a million Jews were killed. The streets were littered with dead bodies.

Matthew 24:29: “But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”

1. Some commentators (e.g., D.A. Carson) argue that it’s at this point that Jesus shifts to events surrounding His Second Coming.
a. If the preceding verses apply to the judgment on Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, then the following verses must as well because of the phrase “But immediately after the tribulation of those days. . . .”

b. The use of “immediately” does not offer any other meaning than “immediately” (Matt. 3:16; 4:20, 22; 8:3; 13:5, 20, 21; 14:22, 27, 31; 20:34; 21:2, 3; etc.).

c. “‘Immediately’ does not usually make room for much of a time gap—certainly not a gap of over 2000 years.”

2. The use of “decreation language”: The meaning of sun, moon, stars, and the powers of the heavens shaken.

a. The biblical approach is to follow the Bible’s own interpretive methodology of how the use of sun, moon, and stars applies to the temporal judgment of nations (Isa. 13:10–13; 24:19–23; 34:4; Ezek. 32:6–8; Joel 2:10, 30–31; 3:15–16; Hab. 3:6–11). In none of these passages is the destruction of the earth in view.

b. In the OT Israel is described as “sun, moon, and stars” (Gen. 37:9).

c. In the NT Israel is symbolized as “sun, moon, and stars” (Rev. 12:1–2).

3. Tim LaHaye writes that the image of the sun, moon, and eleven stars of Genesis 37:9 and the “woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet,” and having “on her head a crown of twelve stars” (Rev. 12:1) “is a reference to the nation of Israel.”

4. Tim LaHaye writes: “These objects are light-conveying objects: The moon is a reflector, the sun, a source of light. They are symbolic of Israel as God’s light-bearer to

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76 Tim LaHaye, Revelation Unveiled, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 198.
humankind. This Israel was in Old Testament days, for God intended her to propagate His message from the Holy Land to the entire world. Unfaithful in the dissemination of this message, the nation of Israel fell under the judgment of God.”

5. When used in Genesis 37 and Revelation 12, the sun, moon, and stars “are symbolic of Israel.”
   a. If they are symbolic of Israel in Genesis 37:9 and Revelation 12:1, then why doesn’t the same hold true in Matthew 24:29?
   b. When Israel is faithful, the sun is shining, the moon is giving off its reflective light, and the stars are positioned high in the heavens.

6. “In Ecclesiastes 12:1, 2, we find that the expression ‘while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened’ is used to symbolize good times. Consequently, the reverse—an expression about the sun, moon, and stars being darkened—would symbolize ‘evil days,’ days of trouble.”

7. The “heavens will be shaken” is also found in the OT and is a metaphor for judgment.
   a. “Therefore I shall make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken from its place at the fury of the Lord of hosts in the day of His burning anger” (Isa. 13:13; also see Joel 2:10; 3:16).
   b. “Then the earth shook and quaked, the foundations of heaven were trembling and were shaken, because He was angry” (2 Sam. 22:8).

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8. Israel and her capital had become like Babylon (1 Pet. 5:13; Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21) similar to the way Jerusalem had become Egypt and Sodom (Rev. 11:8).

**Matthew 24:30:** “and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the land will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

1. The use of “coming” is not always a reference to a physical coming or the Second Coming.
   a. Earlier in the Gospels, there are references to Jesus’ coming to His first-century audience (Matt. 10:23; 16:27–28).  
   b. Notice the three times Jesus threatened to judge the churches of Asia Minor by His “coming” if they did not repent (Rev. 2:5, 16; 3:3). These threats make no sense if the comings refer to a future distant coming.
   c. Jesus stated that His coming in judgment would be before the last apostle died: “For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds. Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom” (Matt. 16:27–28; cf. John 21:1–3).

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79 The plural “some” fits the context very well. “There are some of those who are standing here [Peter, James, John, and other unnamed disciples] who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom” (Matt. 16:28; see Mark 9:14).
2. Throughout the Bible, God showed Himself by the presence of clouds, even though He was not physically present (Ex. 13:21; 14:24; 19:9; 20:21; 24:15; 33:9; 34:5; 1 Kings 8:12).

3. “Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud, and is about to come to Egypt” (Isa. 19:1; see also Ps. 104:3–4). “Coming on clouds,” therefore, is not necessarily an indicator that the physical presence of God is required.

   a. The Son of Man “comes up to the Ancient of Days.”
   b. Jesus is describing an ascent to heaven not a descent to earth.
   c. LaHaye writes that Daniel 7:13 reveals “that Christ will come from heaven to the earth,” this is not what the text says. The Ancient of Days is enthroned in heaven, not on earth or in the “sky” (Dan. 7:9).

5. Daniel 7:13 is quoted again, along with a portion of Psalm 110:1, when Caiaphas the high priest asks Jesus if He is “the Christ, the Son of God” (Matt. 26:63). Jesus says to him, “You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter [lit., from now on] you

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80 R. T. France points out that “Coming on the clouds of heaven (together with the phrase ‘the Son of man’) is a clear allusion to Daniel 7:13, already similarly alluded to in 24:30. . . . We have seen that its natural application in terms of its Old Testament source is to the vindication and enthronement of the Son of man in heaven, not to a descent to earth. It is therefore in this verse a parallel expression to ‘seated at the right hand of Power’; the two phrases refer to the same exalted state, not to two successive situations or events. In this verse the appropriateness of this interpretation is underlined by the fact that this is to be true ‘from now on’ (hereafter is a quite misleading rendering of the more specific phrase ap’ arti, which, as in 23:39 and 26:29, denotes a new period beginning from now). Indeed it is something which Jesus’ inquisitors themselves will see (an echo of Zc. 12:10, as in 24:30?), for it will quickly become apparent in the events of even the next few weeks (not to mention the subsequent growth of the church) that the ‘blasphemer’ they thought they had disposed of is in fact now in the position of supreme authority.” (R. T. France, Matthew: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985], 381.)
shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of
heaven” (Matt. 26:64; see Heb. 8:1–2).

6. N.T. Wright offers the following exposition of Matthew 26:64 that also quotes Daniel
7:13: “The Daniel text . . . has nothing to do with a figure ‘coming’ from heaven to earth.
Despite the widespread opinion that this is what it ‘must’ mean in the gospels, there is
no reason to suppose that on the lips of Jesus, or in the understanding of the earliest
traditions, it meant anything other than vindication. It speaks of exaltation: of one who,
representing ‘the people of the saints of the most high’, is raised up from suffering at
the hands of the beasts and given a throne to sit on, exercising royal power. . . . Jesus is
not . . . suggesting that Caiaphas will witness the end of the space-time order. Nor will
he look out of the window one day and observe a human figure flying downwards on a
cloud. It is absurd to imagine either Jesus, or Mark, or anyone in between, supposing the
words to mean that.”

7. The “sign” is that the Son of Man is enthroned heaven (Acts 1:9–11; 2:25–36; 7:55–46;

8. The question of “seeing” (John 1:51; cp. Ezek. 1:1; 10:11).

a. The same Greek word (horao) is used in John 1:51 as in Matthew 24:30 and 26:64.

b. “Ye shall see. Not, perhaps, with the bodily eyes, but you shall have evidence that it
is so. The thing shall take place, and you shall be a witness of it. . . . It is not probable

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that Jesus referred to any particular instance in which Nathanael should literally see the heavens opened.”

c. Matthew Henry comments: “Yet they are great things which he here foretells: You shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. (a.) Some understand it literally, as pointing at some particular event. Either, [a.] There was some vision of Christ’s glory, in which this was exactly fulfilled, which Nathanael was an eye-witness of, as Peter, and James, and John were of his transfiguration. There were many things which Christ did, and those in the presence of his disciples, which were not written (John 20:30), and why not this?”
d. “See” can refer to a physical seeing, although there is nothing in the gospel accounts where this event is recorded. The same could be true of seeing the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven.

9. “In the phrase hai phulai tēs gēs, ‘the tribes of the earth,’ if tēs gēs is uniformly translated in the NT as ‘the earth,’ then the absence of any mention of the land of Israel there is virtually guaranteed. But the context suggests that Zech. 12:10, 14 is inferred by Matthew in this instance, in which case ‘the tribes of the Land [of Israel]’ is a more appropriate translation.”

Matthew 24:31: “And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.”


1. Angels can either refer to supernatural beings (Heb. 1:14) or human beings.
   
a. Dispensationalist Ed Hindson: “The term angel (Greek, angelos) means ‘messenger.’ God’s angels are His divine messengers (Heb. 1:14; Rev. 1:1), and His true prophets and preachers are called angels of the churches (Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14).”

b. Commentator R. T. France writes: “I once argued that, since the basic meaning of [angelos] is ‘messenger’ (even though its NT uses are predominately in the secondary sense of ‘angel’), here ‘the context favours strongly the primary meaning’. In that case v. 27 [of Mark 13] would be describing the work of Christian missionaries, sent out by the enthroned Son of Man in 8:38, and in the absence of any clear indication that the normal NT meaning of [angelos] is inappropriate here, I now think it more likely that angels are here credited with a ‘missionary’ role in the ingathering of God’s people; cf. the description of angels in Heb. 1:14 as [‘Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?’].”

2. The elect were present in Jesus’ day (Matt. 24:22, 24).

3. There may be a relationship between this passage and Matthew 10:23: “But whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes.”

4. Because the land of Israel is in view, the “four winds” and “one end of heaven to the other” are symbolic metaphors for all the land of Israel.

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5. When Israel was in captivity, we are told that “a great trumpet” was blown and those
   “who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt
   will come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem” (Isa. 27:13).


7.

Matthew 24:32: “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already
become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.”

1. Dispensationalist John F. Walvoord rejects the fig-tree-equals-Israel view. He writes:

   a. “A better interpretation is that Christ was using a natural illustration. Because the fig
      tree brings forth new leaves late in the spring, the budding of the leaves is evidence
      that summer is near. In a similar way, when those living in the great tribulation see
      the signs predicted, they will know that the second coming of Christ is near. The
      signs in this passage, accordingly, are not the revival of Israel, but the great
      tribulation.”

   b. If Israel is the fig tree in Matthew 24:32, then Israel is the fig tree in Matthew 21:18–
      20 where Jesus says, “‘No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you.’ And at once
      the fig tree withered.”

2. The olive tree is a more appropriate symbol for Israel (Rom. 11:17–21).

3. In Luke’s parallel account, we read about “the fig tree and all the trees” (Luke 21:29).

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Matthew 24:33: “even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.”

1. Jesus makes it clear that it is His present audience (“you”) that will “see all these things.”
2. “Near” is defined as “right at the door” (cf. James 5:8–9).

Matthew 24:34: “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.”

I. Meaning of “this generation”

A. Jesus was mistaken.

1. C. S. Lewis: “But there is worse to come. ‘Say what you like,’ we shall be told, ‘the apocalyptic beliefs of the first Christians have been proved to be false. It is clear from the New Testament that they all expected the Second Coming in their own lifetime. And, worse still, they had a reason, and one which you will find very embarrassing. Their Master had told them so. He shared, and indeed created, their delusion. He said in so many words, “this generation shall not pass till all these things be done.” And He was wrong. He clearly knew no more about the end of the world than anyone else.’ It is certainly the most embarrassing verse in the Bible.”

2. Bertrand Russell: “I am concerned with Christ as he appears in the Gospel narrative as it stands, and there one does find some things that do not seem to be very wise. For one thing, He certainly thought that His second coming would

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occur in clouds of glory before the death of all the people who were living at that
time. There are a great many texts that prove that and there are a lot of places
where it is quite clear that He believed that His coming would happen during the
lifetime of many then living. That was the belief of His earlier followers, and it
was the basis of a good deal of His moral teaching.”

3. Bart Ehrman in *Misquoting Jesus*: His trek down the road of skepticism begins
with what he describes as “one of the most popular books on campus” that was
being read while he was a student at Moody Bible Institute in the 1970s, Hal
“Lindsay’s [sic] apocalyptic blueprint for our future, *The Late Great Planet Earth.*”
Ehrman writes that he “was particularly struck by the ‘when’” of Lindsey’s
prophetic outline of Matthew 24. Ehrman writes that “this message proved
completely compelling to us. It may seem odd now—given the circumstances
that 1988 has come and gone, with no Armageddon—but, on the other hand,
there are millions of Christians who still believe that the Bible can be read
literally as completely inspired in its predictions of what is soon to happen to
bring history as we know it to a close.”

4. Christopher Hitchens in a debate with Douglas Wilson at Westminster
Theological Seminary on October 29, 2008.

5. Vincent Bugliosi, the lead prosecutor in the Charles Manson trial and co-author
of *Helter Skelter*, sees unfulfilled prophecy as an indictment of Jesus’ credibility

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a. Bugliosi comments on the Bible’s statement, “‘Behold, I am coming soon’ (Revelation 22:12).”89

b. In an extended endnote, he writes the following: “How soon did Jesus mean? Very soon. Indeed, in Matthew 16:27–28 he said, concerning his return to ‘judge all people’ (Judgment Day), ‘I assure you that some of you who are standing here right now will not die before you see me, the Son of Man, coming in My kingdom.’ (See also Mark 9:1; Mark 13:30 ['this generation'], and Luke 9:27.) James 5:8 proclaims, ‘The coming of the Lord is at hand.’ This poses what would seem to be an insurmountable problem for bible Fundamentalists (creationists). . . . But how can they get around Jesus saying he was going to return during the lives of many of those living during his time?”90

c. Bugliosi also references John 21:21–23 where Jesus implies that He will return before the apostle John dies. Since Jesus has not returned, then John must still be alive somewhere in the world today91 or Jesus was mistaken.

90Bugliosi, Divinity of Doubt, 302, note 9.
91Bugliosi is sloppy in his research on this issue in a number of ways. He mentions a 1959 “novel” by Wilson Tucker with the title The Planet Earth. It was not a novel but a 1959 short story called “The Planet King” that is found in the book The Best of Wilson Tucker (1982).

I’ve only found one modern author who even suggests that John might still be alive. David Dolan’s Israel in Crisis is a perfect example of forcing the Bible to fit an already developed prophetic system. Dolan tries to explain Jesus’ comments in John 21:18–23 in which Jesus says to Peter about John, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me” (21:22). Because Dolan holds to a futuristic eschatology, he must force Jesus’ words into his dispensational mold: “In further nonbiblical research, I discovered that many early church authorities believed that John had never died. This was based on the Lord’s mysterious words in John 21 and also on the fact that, unlike the other apostles, no credible account exists about his death. I suspect that may be because John did not die.” (David Dolan, Israel in Crisis: What Lies Ahead? (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 2001), 143.)
d. “Jesus said to [Peter], ‘If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!’ Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple [John] would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, ‘If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?’ Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, ‘If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?’”

B. This race.

1. Would be *genos* instead of *genea*. If Jesus had meant to say “race,” He would have used *genea*.

   a. Arno C. Gaebelein, who takes a futurist position on this passage, argues in another context, “Some have taught that the word ‘church’ means a synagogue. Church and synagogue, however, are totally different terms.”

   b. In a footnote on the same page, Gaebelein writes: “Of late this argument has been pressed in certain quarters that the word church means synagogue. However if the Lord had meant synagogue the Holy Spirit surely would have used the Greek ‘*synagogue*’ instead of ‘ecclesia.’”

Dolan speculates that John could have been living on a Greek island for two millennia, wandering around the world hiding his true identity disguised, or caught up into heaven like Elijah where he has been supernaturally preserved until he is needed. John 21:23 refutes this notion: “yet Jesus did not say to [Peter] that [John] would not die, but only, ‘If I want to remain until I come, what is that to you.’”

So what is the meaning of Jesus’ words? John Gill offers the best explanation. The “coming” referred to by Jesus in John 21 refers, “not till his second coming to judge the quick and the dead at the last day” but the coming “in his power . . . on the Jewish nation, in the destruction of their city and temple by the Romans [in AD 70].” As Gill points out, “till which time John did live, and many years after; and was the only one of the disciples that lived till that time, and who did not die a violent death.”

c. On Matthew 24:34, he argues, “The word *genea* means not necessarily the same persons living, but it also has the meaning of *race*. The English word ‘generation’ has this meaning of ‘family or a race or a certain class of people.’ And so has the Greek. It is used in that sense in Luke xvi:8 ‘This generation’ is the race sprung from Abraham, God’s chosen earthly people.”

d. Let’s apply Gaebelein’s logic on synagogue and church to race and generation: “if the Lord had meant race the Holy Spirit surely would have used the Greek ‘genos’ instead of ‘genea.’”

e. Notice the hedge words “not necessarily.” Also notice that he does not compare the use of *genea* in Matthew 24:34 with the way Matthew uses the phrase in other passages (Matt. 11:16; 12:39, 41, 45; 23:36).

2. “While some have attempted to relate ‘generation’ (Gr *genea*) to the race of the Jews, indicating the survival of their race until Christ’s return, this seems somewhat stretched. Arndt and Gingrich [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*] (p. 153) prefer ‘age’ or ‘period of time.’”

3. “[B]asically, the sum total of those born at the same time, expanded to include all those living at a given time *generation, contemporaries*. . . . Jesus looks upon the whole contemporary generation of Jews as a uniform mass confronting him

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[‘this generation] (cf. Gen. 7:1; Ps 11:8) Mt. 11:16; 12:41f; 23:36; 24:34; Mk 13:30; Lk 7:31; 11:29–32, 50f; 17:25; 21:32.”

4. Makes no logical sense: “The Jewish race will not pass away until all these things take place; therefore when all these things take place the Jewish race will pass away.”

5. Makes the Jewish race for all time “wicked” (Luke 11:29) and “perverse” (Acts 2:40).

6. “What does it mean, therefore, that “this generation” would not pass away until all these things take place (24:34)? Some pretribulationists have suggested that “generation” in this passage means “race,” or “nation,” or “family.” Thus the Lord would be saying that the nation of Israel would not pass away until all of the things spoken of in the Olivet Discourse are fulfilled. Though this is a true statement, this interpretation is based on an unusual meaning for “generation” (genea). Moreover, the “until” is a problem, for it would imply that the nation of Israel would pass away after the second coming, and Scripture certainly does not teach this. Some good Bible teachers have argued that “this generation” is used in a negative sense, a pejorative sense, meaning “wicked generation.”

righteous. Instead, says Christ, the wicked will be here until after the tribulation and second coming. In addition, Jesus may be making the point that the wicked will receive the judgments of the tribulation. This view may be correct. It is certainly true that the wicked will be on earth until after the tribulation and second coming. Its weakness is that it is questionable that “this generation” is used enough in a pejorative sense to become a technical term for wicked people.”

C. This nation (ethnos): the use of ethnos is used elsewhere Matthew 24 (vv. 7, 9, 14).

Why would Jesus choose genea when He really meant “nation”?  

D. “This generation” is really “that generation” (Henry Morris). There is a perfectly good Greek word for “that” if that was what Jesus wanted to say.  

E. This evil kind or type of generation:  

1. “‘This generation' then ‘represents an evil class of people who will oppose Jesus' disciples until the day He returns.’” An interpretation, not a translation.  

2. Jesus has a particular generation in mind; that’s why He used the near demonstrative “this.”  

3. See Matthew 12:38–45. It was that first-century generation that asked for a sign.

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97 “The word 'this' is the demonstrative adjective and could better be translated 'that generation.' That is, the generation which sees all these signs (probably starting with World War I) shall not have completely passed away until all these things have taken place” (1045) (Henry Morris, Christian Defender’s Bible, 1045).  
98 The Pharisees say to Jesus, “We want to see a sign” (Matt. 12:38). Jesus answers, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign” (12:39). That makes their generation an evil and adulterous generation since they are
F. “The generation that sees these signs.”

1. In order to get this translation, “this” has to be replaced with “the” and four words have to be added: “The generation that sees these signs will not pass away. . . .”

2. Thomas Ice and Tim LaHaye claim that Matthew 24:34 should be read, “The generation that ‘sees’ these things will not pass till all is fulfilled.”

3. In his book The Beginning of the End, Tim LaHaye writes, “Soon the door to survival, Jesus the Christ, is going to be closed, and God will thunder judgment upon this generation.” What generation does LaHaye have in view with his use of “this generation”? Of course it’s the generation alive in 1972. “The fact that we are the generation that will be on earth when our Lord comes certainly should not depress us.”

the ones who asked for a sign. Even so, Jesus gives them a sign, “the sign of Jonah the prophet” (12:39). And when was the sign of Jonah the prophet fulfilled? In their day, and only their day: “for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (12:40). The use of “this generation” (12:41–42) is used by Jesus to point out how their generation will be judged by the people of Nineveh and the Queen of the South because someone greater than Jonah and Solomon “is here.” The “here” was in Jesus’ day since only those people living in Jesus’ day could actually see the sign of the resurrection. To repeat, Jesus does not say “this kind of generation will not pass away.” He says “this generation,” the same phrase that is used in Matthew 23:36, a verse that Thomas Ice says “is an undisputed reference to A.D.70.”

99 In order to get this translation, “this” has to be replaced with “the” and four words have to be added to the verse: “The generation that sees these signs will not pass away. . . .” This is not the way to interpret the Bible. In addition, we are told in Matthew 24:33 who will see the signs: “even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.” The “you” is them not us.


102 LaHaye, The Beginning of the End, 172.
4. Matthew 24:33 tells us what generation will see “all these signs”: “[E]ven so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.”

The generation of Jesus’ day saw all the signs of Matthew 24.

G. *Genētai:* “begin to take place.”

1. One last attempt to circumvent the obvious meaning of the timing of “this generation” is to claim that the use of the Greek verb *genētai* means that the passage should read “until all these things begin to take place.” Robert H. Mounce lists this meaning as a possible way to understand the timing of Matthew 24:34, although he does not accept it: “[I]f *genētai* (happen) is taken as an ingressive aorist, the sentence would indicate that before the generation alive at that time had died, all the things described in connection with the end will have started to take place.”

   a. *Genētai* in Matthew 24:34 is not an ingressive aorist since an ingressive aorist must meet three criteria: (1) The present tense of the verb in question must denote a state of continued action; (2) the verb in question must be a denominative (a verb built on a noun); (3) the verb must be a first aorist rather than a second aorist.

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103 Emphasizes the beginning of the action. “We are told, ‘Jesus wept’ (Jn. 11: 35). Many scholars remark that the aorist tense of ‘wept’ is the ingressive aorist. Hence, some translate the verse, ‘Jesus burst into tears.’” (William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 19 ], ) Is He still weeping?


105 In English “shelf” and “carpet” form the denominatives “to shelve” and “to carpet,” but when we “carpet the stairs,” we put carpet on stairs and when we “shelve a book,” we put a book on a shelf.
b. *Genetai* is a (1) second aorist rather than a first aorist; (2) it is not a
denominative; (3) the present tense of *ginomai* does not denote a state of
continued action.

2. None of the Greek grammars (e.g., Robertson,\(^{106}\) Blass-Debrunner-Funk,\(^{107}\) Dana
& Mantey\(^{108}\)) suggest this meaning of *genētaï* in Matthew 24:34 (or Mark 13:30

3. “In Arndt & Gingrich, it is interesting that the extensive entry on *ginomai* makes
no reference to *genētaï* in Matthew 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32, so that no
specific meaning is attributed. Even the exact form *genētaï* is not parsed.”\(^{109}\)

4. The bodily “coming of Christ,” as futurists understand the references to
“coming” in Matthew 24:30, did not “begin” to take place in the first century.

5. Let’s plug in the destruction of the temple as one of “these things” that begins to
take place: “This generation will not pass away *until the destruction of the
temple begins to take place*.” The destruction of the Temple didn’t “begin” to be
destroyed before that generation passed away; it was destroyed *before* that
generation passed away, and it is no longer being destroyed.

6. Stanley Toussaint, a premillenialist, argues against it, specifically referencing C.E.
Stowe’s article\(^ {110}\) cited by Barry Horner for support (see my debate with

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\(^{106}\) *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research.*

\(^{107}\) *Grammar of New Testament Greek.*


\(^{109}\) Barry Horner, “The Olivet Discourse: Matthew 24—Futurism and Preterism” (2008), 31. This paper was
prepared by Horner for the November 22, 2008 debate.

\(^{110}\) Stowe, “The Eschatology of Christ, With Special Reference to the Discourse in Matt, XXIV and XXV.”
Horner\textsuperscript{111}: “This approach fails to note the significance of the words ‘all these things’ . . . in the same verse. It could hardly be said that all these things began to be [fulfilled] in the lifetime of the disciples. How could Christ begin His coming at the time when it is described as being like lightning? Nor does this explanation fit the meaning of verse thirty-three,”\textsuperscript{112} which reads “even so YOU too, when YOU see all THESE things, recognize that He is near, right at the door” (Matt. 24:33).

7. The abomination of desolation did not begin to stand in the temple and is still standing (Matt. 24:15).

8. The people of Judea did not begin to flee to the mountains and are still fleeing (24:16).

9. The great tribulation, according to futurists, did not begin to take place since it is viewed as a definite period (seven years) sometime in the future (24:21).

10. To say “until all these things begin to take place” destroys the parenthesis theory which is the foundation of dispensationalism: no prophecy is being fulfilled this side of the rapture. Either the Olivet Discourse refers to that first-century

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{111}http://www.americanvision.com/matthew24futureorfulfilled.aspx  
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{112}Stanley D. Toussaint, \textit{Behold the King: A Study of Matthew} (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1980), 279. The odd this is that Toussaint seems to have changed his view in a paper he wrote critiquing a preterist interpretation of Matthew 24: “A fifth interpretation seems best. It takes the verb \textit{genētai} as an ingressive aorist. The same verb is found in all three Synoptics and is translated ‘takes place’ (Matt. 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32). As an ingressive aorist it emphasizes the beginning of the action with the meaning ‘begin to take place.’ \textbf{All those things would begin in that generation and find their ultimate completion at the Second Advent.} This fits with the idea of not being deceived by the events mentioned in Matthew 24:4–8. The Lord specifically referred to these as ‘the beginning of birth pangs’ (v. 8).” The “beginning of birth pangs” refers to the events of “this generation” not some future generation. There is the further problem of when these events began to take place. The coming of the Son of Man began in that generation? The sun and moon went dark in that generation? The stars fell in that generation and continue to fall? http://planetpreterist.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=2241&catid=1
generation, or it refers to a single future generation. It cannot refer to ongoing prophetic fulfillment.

11. Let’s suppose “begin to pass away” is the correct rendering of genētai in Matthew 24:34. Since “this generation” always means the generation to whom Jesus is speaking, the “beginning to pass away” would start with Jesus’ declaration on the Mount of Olives of the unfolding of these events and end at the close of that present generation. Note that genētai is used in Matthew 24:32 and is translated as “has already become tender.”

12. Doug McIntosh writes: “How do we know that Matthew 24:34 contains an ingressive aorist? Because all the things that Jesus prophesied had not taken place when that generation passed away, and Jesus is not a false prophet.”¹¹³

a. This is a classic example of begging the question, declaring to be true what must first be proven.

b. As has been pointed out on numerous occasions, that the use of “this generation” by Jesus always refers to the generation to whom He was speaking and no other (see the discussion above on “this generation” and near demonstratives).

c. So then, one of the reasons genētai is not an ingressive aorist, in addition to the grammatical reasons listed above, is that the “this generation” refers to the generation to whom Jesus was speaking.


14. This generation.

1. The right word: genea.

2. Even the *New Scofield Study Bible* says, “The prediction of v. 36 [in Matt. 23] was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.”

a. Why would the meaning of the same phrase (“this generation”) mean something different just one chapter later?

b. If Jesus wanted to distinguish the two generations, He could have easily avoided all confusion by using “that generation.”

3. Genea is used throughout the gospels to refer to a period of time: (Mt. 1:17; 11:16; 12:39, 41, 42, 45; 16:4; 17:17; 23:36; 24:34; Mk. 8:12, 38; 9:19; 13:30; Lk. 1:48, 50; 7:31; 9:41; 11:29, 30, 32, 50, 51; 16:8; 17:25; 21:32).

a. “So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations...” (Mt. 1:17).

b. “His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation” (Lk. 1:50).

c. If anyone attempted to translate “generation” as “race” in these passages the result would be absurdity. For example, there would be 42 different races of Jews between Abraham and Christ (cf. Mt. 1:17).

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4. The most common usage of “this generation” (*he genea haute*) occurs 18 times in the gospels (Mt. 11:16; 12:41, 45; 23:36; 24:34; Mk. 8:12 [twice], 8:38; 13:30 Lk. 7:31; 11:29 [in sentence form]; 11:30, 31, 32, 50, 51, 17:25; 21:32).

   a. The use of the near demonstrative “this” tells us that Jesus had His own generation in view.

   b. If Jesus wanted to identify a future generation, He could have chosen the far demonstrative “that”: “that day” (Matt. 7:22); “that hour” (10:19); “that time” (24:10); “that day and hour” (24:36).

   c. Matthew uses “this” throughout his gospel to identify things that are near: “this day” (6:11); “this man” (8:9); “this city” (10:23); “this place” (12:6); “this people” (15:8); “this rock” (15:18); “this little child (18:4); “this mountain” (21:21); “this stone” (21:44); “this image” (22:20); “this gospel” (24:14); “this woman” (26:13); “this night” (26:31), etc. Why not “this generation”?

   d. The same is true of the plural “these” and “those: “these stones” (Matt. 3:9; 4:3); “when will these things be?” (24:3); “all these things” 24:33, 34) and “those days” (24:19, 22, 29, 38).

5. In his comments on Ephesians 3:5, premillennialist Harold Hoehner writes: “The word genea occurs 236 times in the LXX and it appears 184 times in the canonical books. Over 150 times it is translated from [the Hebrew *dor*], meaning ‘period, age, generation’ (Gen 7:1; 9:12; Exod 3:15). It is frequently used of the period covered by a generation of humans (Gen 15:16; Exod 1:6). In the NT it occurs forty-three times, thirty-three times in the Synoptics, and only four times...
in Paul’s writings (Eph 3:5, 21; Phil 2:15; Col 1:26) with the same basic meaning of ‘age’ or ‘generation.’ This matches with the parallel passage in Col 1:26 where it states that the mystery was hid from the ages (aiwnwn) and the generations (genewn).”  

Matthew 24:36–25:1–46

1. Marcellus Kik states that “the first 35 verses of Matthew 24 relate to the destruction of Jerusalem and the events preceding that destruction. With verse 36 a new subject is introduced, namely, the second coming of Christ and the attendant final judgment. This forms the content of Matthew 24:36–25:46.”

2. Others see no break at 24:36.

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Additional Reading

Available at www.AmericanVision.com

1. Gary DeMar, Is Jesus Coming Soon?

2. Gary DeMar, Last Days Madness.


5. Gary DeMar, Left Behind: Separating Fact from Fiction.


10. C. Marvin Pate, ed., Four Views on the Book of Revelation.

11. Darrell L. Bock, Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond.


15. Dwight Wilson, Armageddon Now! The Premillenarian Response to Russia and Israel Since 1917.

16.