



Why 2008? Here's Why...

by Pastor F.M. Riley

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"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (1 Peter 3:15)

Introduction

Dear _____,

I want to thank you for writing. You asked me several questions about the timing of the Lord's coming to rapture His people to glory. If I understood your questions correctly, what you really want to know is "why I believe that the rapture will occur and the Tribulation will begin in 2008 [or before]?"

Sister, your questions have given me both incentive and opportunity to give you an answer that should be of benefit to all of the Five Doves readers. My earnest prayer is that my answers will be Scripturally enlightening and an encouragement, not only to you, but to all of God's people who read this study.

So let's get started.....

In Just One Generation

I believe there is only appropriate place to begin this study, for everything that I will write about in this study has occurred, or is occurring, in only one Biblically specified *"generation."*

The Parable of the Fig Tree

In **Matthew 24:32-35** the Lord Jesus Christ gave to His disciples what is commonly referred to as *"The Parable of the Fig Tree."* See also **Mark 13:28-31** and **Luke 21:29-33**. This parable was given right after the Lord had concluded the prophecies set forth in the preceding 31 verses of the chapter. In the verses which follow this parable (**24:36-51 – 25:1-46**), the Lord simply expanded upon the prophecies already set forth in the first 31 verses. This arrangement of the Lord's discourse makes it obvious that the Lord Himself placed great emphasis on *"The Parable of the Fig Tree."* This parable is very important. Is there a reason for this? Let's see.....

To be learned.....Notice that the Lord instructed His disciples to *“learn”* the parable. Therefore, any one claiming to be a “Christian” that refuses to study and *“learn”* the truth that is taught in this parable, is willfully disobeying the Lord Himself. Read **John 14:21-24**. It is sad that many of God’s people [*not all*] read **Matthew 24** and yet pay little or no attention to this parable, and don’t really have a clue as to what it means or why the Lord inserted it in His Olivet Discourse.

The Fig Tree.....When we obey the Lord and study this parable, what we *“learn”* is that the *“fig tree”* is symbolic of Israel. This is indisputable for anyone wanting to deal honestly with God’s Word, for such is clearly taught and stated in **Jeremiah 24:4-7** and **Hosea 9:10**, and is used in such a manner in many other Scriptures.

The *“Parable of the Fig Tree”* then speaks prophetically of the re-establishment and expansion of the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel became a reality in modern times on May 14, 1948. The certainty of this prophecy coming to pass was emphasized by the Lord when He followed the parable by saying, *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away,”* **24:35**.

That this parable prophetically teaches the re-establishment of the nation of Israel was unwittingly [?] verified when the newly established nation issued their first postage stamp. That first stamp was imprinted with a picture of *a fig tree budding*. Glory to God! Coincidence...?? Or was it the hand of God! You decide!

The tender branch.....When the nation of Israel was re-established, it was only a *“tender branch.”* Many people in high places, supposedly friends [?] of the Jewish people, had predicted that when the Jews declared themselves an “independent” nation, the Arab nations would wipe them out. But it didn’t happen! *Little David beat Goliath right into the dust!* When the Jews declared their independence, the whole Jewish population numbered only about 350,000. They went to war against the Arab nations with a combined population of a hundred million people, and yet God gave Israel the victory! Glory! Praise the Lord! The *“tender branch”* had succeeded in “sprouting” again. Read **Job 14:7-9** and give praise to Israel’s God [*and mine*].

The newly formed nation of Israel remained a *“tender branch”* for the next 7 years. But then in the 8th year the Lord began to “toughen them up.” In 1956 the Jews had to fight the *“Suez Canal War.”* Once again, the odds were overwhelming, but again God gave them the victory. The *“tender branch”* had been buffeted in the storm, and had survived and began to grow with new life. The population of Israel began to increase as Jews in other countries began to realize that Israel was here to stay, and they started coming “home.” Read **Jeremiah 24:6**.

Putting forth leaves.....Eleven more years passed during which the population of Israel steadily increased. Then in 1967 Israel showed the whole world just “how tough” the *“tender branch”* had become. That year Israel fought the *“Six Day War.”* In just six days God again gave Israel victory over the combined forces of the Arab

nations. In that war Israel regained control of their beloved city of Jerusalem, the Sinai peninsula, and the west bank, known to the Jews as *"Judea and Samaria."* The *"tender branch"* in just six days had *"put forth leaves."*

All these things.....Now carefully notice the next statement made by our Lord, *"So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors."* Remember that the Lord commanded His disciples to *"learn"* this parable. See what things? Know what is near? What doors? I'm so glad you asked!

The word *"all"* in this verse is translated from the Greek word, *"pas."* This word literally means, *"all at the same time."* See Thayer's Greek Lexicon, page 493, Strong's No. 3956. In other words, the Lord was telling the disciples that when *"all these things"* that He had predicted in the preceding 31 verses were happening *at the same time*, then the disciples would *"know"* that *"the kingdom of God is nigh at hand,"* **Mark 13:29-31.** Read Mark's account for yourself. The Lord said in Mark's account that the *"it"* in Matthew's account is *"the kingdom of God."* Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!

The Kingdom of God.....In other words, the Lord told the disciples that when that time arrived in human history when Israel had become a nation again, and there were false messiahs arising, wars, racial division, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, people murdering Jews and Christians in the name of God, hatred of the Jews, false prophets spewing out their poison, the abounding of iniquity, and love waxing cold (apostasy), all at the same time, then God's people should *"know"* that *"it [the kingdom of God] is near, even at the doors."* Hallelujah!

Folks, *"the kingdom of God is near."* The Lord said so! If some reading this want to argue about it, don't bother me with your silly argument. Go argue with the Lord. Tell Him you don't believe Him. Give Him all your silly reasons for putting off the time of His coming. He said when we *"see all these things"* His Kingdom is *"even at the doors."* The Lord said it, and as far as I am concerned, that settles it!

I can see *"all these things"* going on today right before my eyes, and if I can, then you can. If you can't, then maybe you ought to take off your blinders, get your head out of the TV, quite watching the "slop" operas and the "bawl" games, and look around you to see what is going on in the world today.

The Doors... Let's not overlook the Lord's statement about *"the doors."* Most people pay little or no attention to this expression. Yet it is very important in understanding and *"rightly dividing"* the truths set forth in this parable.

Notice that the word is *"doors,"* not *"door."* It is plural rather than singular. It is also plural in the Greek text. Check it out for yourself.

When the Lord used the plural form, *"doors,"* in relation to *"the kingdom of God"* being near, He was pointing out a truth to His disciples that is commonly overlooked.

The Lord pointed out that there are two doors connected with the revelation of *"the kingdom of God,"* and therefore two different times for the *"doors"* to open.

The first *"door"* is found in **Revelation 3:8**. In this verse the Lord told His New Testament church, *".....behold, I have set before thee [in your future] an open door, and no man can shut it:..."* The exact expression in the Greek text is, *".....a door having been opened....."* This *"open door"* in the future of the Lord's church is the door in heaven that New Testament believers will go through as they enter *"the kingdom of God"* at the time of the rapture. Glory!

Proof of this statement is found in **Revelation 4:1**. In this verse the exact same expression occurs, word for word, in the Greek text, that the Lord gave to His church in **Revelation 3:8**. This verse in the Greek text literally reads, *"After these things I saw, and behold a door having been opened in heaven: and the voice which I heard at the first as of a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up hither, and I will show to thee what things must take place after these things."* This verse, occurring at the end of the prophecies about the church age, and at the beginning of the prophecies about the Tribulation, quite obviously typifies the rapture of New Testament believers into *"the kingdom of God"* in Heaven. This is the first *"door"* of the *"doors"* the Lord spoke about in connection with *"the kingdom of God"* in **Matthew 24:33**, **Mark 13:29**, and **Luke 21:31**. Then what is the second *"door"*?

The second *"door"* is found in **Revelation 19:11**, where John wrote, *"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war."* This verse and the context, speaks of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ back to this earth at the end of the Tribulation to destroy His enemies and establish *"the kingdom of God"* upon this earth. Though the word *"door"* is not used in this verse, it is clearly implied. In the Greek text the word *"opened"* in this verse is the exact same word used, and in the same tense, as the word *"opened"* in **Revelation 3:8** and **4:1**.

Therefore 7 years after the first *"door"* is opened ushering New Testament believers into *"the kingdom of God"* in Heaven, the second *"door"* will be opened allowing the Lord and all the glorified saints to return to earth to establish *"the kingdom of God"* upon earth. Read **Matthew 6:9-10**, and rejoice! Praise the Lord!

Remember, the Lord said, *"So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors."* Glory! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Folks, the rapture of God's people is right at the *"door."*

But to make sure that His people wouldn't overlook it, the Lord narrowed it down even more for us...

This generation.....The next thing the Lord said was, ***"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."*** Right here the Lord predicted that all of those things would occur in one specific generation, and are going to be ***"fulfilled"*** before all of those living in that generation ***"pass away"*** [die off]. Wow! Glory to God!

What ***"generation"***? Those teaching *Preterist* theology claim that the Lord was referring to the generation living at the time He gave this prophecy, and that all of **Matthew 24** has already been fulfilled (*except the Lord's actual return*). Is that so? No it is not so! Such a *false interpretation* is impossible, for ***"all these things"*** in the preceding 31 verses includes ***"the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," [24:30]***. The last time I checked, the Lord hadn't returned yet. Folks, ***"all these things"*** is an on going process taking place during ***"this generation,"*** and they haven't ***"all"*** been concluded yet. Before ***"all these things"*** are finally fulfilled, the Lord will have returned! The *Preterist* claim is a perversion of God's Word and a *false claim*. Let's examine this statement for ourselves and see the truth.....

In **Matthew 24:34** the word ***"generation"*** is translated from the Greek word, ***"genea."***

This word literally means, ***"1. a begetting, birth, nativity; 2. that which has been begotten, men of the same stock; a family; the several ranks in a natural descent, the successive members of a genealogy; a race of men; 3. the whole multitude of men living at the same time: Matthew 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32.*** See Thayer's Greek Lexicon, page 112, Strong's No. 1074.

This word is used numerous times in the New Testament. A "generation" is a specified length of time from the birth of a child until the birth of that child's children. In God's Word a "generation" involves a specified length of time and is associated with a person or people or event that occurs within that particular time.

The Lord didn't leave us in the dark on this subject. The length of a "generation" is clearly defined in God's Word for those who are willing to ***"search the Scriptures."*** I have heard many "guesses" and various claims as to how long a "generation" is in the Word of God. Instead of guessing or estimating or *assuming*, why not just let God's Word define it for us? God's Word is the final authority!

I have personally looked up and studied every single place in the Bible where the word, ***"generation,"*** is used, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Hebrew and Greek words which are translated as ***"generation"*** and ***"generations,"*** occur 172 times in the Old Testament, and 77 times in the New Testament, and are translated from 3 different Hebrew words in the Old Testament and 6 different Greek words in the New Testament.

In carefully studying every one of these Scripture passages, I determined that God's inspired Word defines the length of a "generation" as being 33 years minimum and 40 years maximum. If this doesn't fit any reader's theory on the length of a Bible "generation," then I would suggest carefully restudying your theory. It is not God's Word that is wrong!

In making my "generation" study, I also discovered that the Lord has repeatedly subjected Israel to 40 year periods of testing. There are numerous examples of this truth in God's Word. Our readers can look them up and check them out for yourself.

In the Olivet Discourse the Lord was answering questions asked by four Jews, **Mark 13:3-4**. They came to the Lord asking Jewish questions about Jewish concerns. The Lord answered them by speaking of things which would be of particular concern to the Jews during this present dispensation, and on to the end of the Tribulation. The entire discourse was then given to the Jews, was for the Jews, and is primarily concerned with the Jews. Since the discourse primarily concerns the Jews, then I have to believe that the "**generation**" under consideration in **Matthew 24:34** is a 40 year period of testing for the Jews.

I think it is worthy of note that from the time the Lord gave the Olivet Discourse to these four Jews, it was 40 years until their Temple was destroyed. Now here at the end of this present dispensation, there is another 40 year period of testing for the Jews. "**This generation**" is then a period of 40 years.

And the Lord Himself said that.....

Pass Away... "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." This does not mean that everything the Lord predicted in the first 31 verses of the chapter will be fulfilled within the bounds of "**this generation.**" What it does mean is that all of the "**generation**" of people living at the time that "**the tender branch [Israel] putteth forth leaves**" [expanded their territory, regaining their beloved Jerusalem] will not "die off" before "**the kingdom of God**" is established upon this earth. Some of them will still be alive when that glorious event occurs. Glory!

Folks, I was 14 years of age in 1948, the year Israel was re-established as a nation. I was 33 years old when the "**Six Day War**" was fought, restoring to Israel her capitol city, the Temple Mount, the Sinai peninsula, and the West Bank. So I was alive when "**this generation**" began. I have lived during the time of "**this generation.**" I am a part of "**this generation.**" I count myself blessed of the Lord to be one of those living in "**this generation.**" I have been able to watch many of the great end-time prophecies of His Word being fulfilled before my very eyes. I am now 73 years of age, and if it is in accordance with the Lord's plan for my life [*His will be done, not mine*], I fully expect to be one of those of God's people "**.....which are alive and remain unto**

the coming of the Lord.....," which will be *".....caught up together with them [the resurrected saints] to meet the Lord in the air:.....,"* **1 Thessalonians 4:15-17.** Glory! Hallelujah!

The Time Element.....Since *"this generation"* is a period of 40 years, then when did it begin? I'm glad you asked!

The Lord told us exactly when *"this generation"* would begin when He said, *".....When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves....."* Folks, Israel was re-established as a nation in 1948, but for 19 years there was no expansion of Israel's territory. It was not until the 1967 Six Day War that Israel recovered their beloved capitol city of Jerusalem and other areas, expanding their territory. **1967** was the year that the *"...tender branch.....putteth forth leaves....."* The 40 years of *"this generation"* then began in 1967. Now you know!

Since *"this generation"* is 40 years in length, and it began in 1967, then when will it end? 1967 + 40 = 2007. Hello! Do I have your attention yet?

But there is more! For God's Word reveals that *"this generation"* is also.....

The Last Generation

Israel was re-established as a nation in 1948. It is then more than coincidence that **Psalm 48**, the **Psalm** that corresponds with 1948, describes exactly what happened immediately following Israel's declaration of independence. See **Psalm 48:4-7**, and compare the statements made in these verses with the actual history of what occurred in Israel in the last half of May, 1948, and the summer of 1948. Is our God amazing? Then give Him glory! The Psalmist predicted these events some 3,000 years in advance of their fulfillment. Glory to God! Praise the Lord!

Then in this same **Psalm** in verse **13**, the Psalmist was inspired of God to write, *"Mark ye well her bulwarks [Zion...Jerusalem], consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following."* Notice the words I have underlined carefully, then take your Hebrew Lexicon or Concordance and look up the meaning of those words. The word *"following"* in this verse is translated from the Hebrew word, *"acharon."* This Hebrew word literally means, *"hinder; last; hindermost; latter; rereward; uttermost."* See Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon, page 33, Strong's No. 314. In other words, the latter part of **Psalm 48:13]** in the Hebrew text literally reads, *"...that ye may tell it to the last generation."*

Since this **Psalm** talks about the re-establishment of the nation of Israel, and the Lord was referring to the re-establishment of the nation of Israel in *"The Parable of the Fig Tree,"* then isn't it obvious that the Psalmist and the Lord were both speaking about the same "generation"? The Psalmist, writing by Divine Inspiration, says that it is *"the last generation."*

This truth is confirmed a second time in *Psalm 78*. This *Psalm* corresponds with 1978, the year that Israel signed a "Peace Treaty" with Egypt. In verse 4 the exact same word is used in the Hebrew text that is used in *Psalm 48:13*. "...**showing to the generation to come [acharon] the praises of the Lord....**" In the literal Hebrew, "...**showing to the last generation...**" This verse, which again deals with the re-established nation of Israel, again confirms that "**this generation**" mentioned by the Lord in the *Parable of the Fig Tree* is "**the last generation.**" Glory to God! Hallelujah! God's people [*true believers*] are soon going "home."

I do not want any reader to misunderstand the truths presented in these passages. The reference to "**the last generation**" in both of these passages does not mean that there will be no future generations of people. Such an idea would be totally contrary to God's covenant with Noah in *Genesis 9:8-12*, and many other passages in God's Word. According to God's inspired Word, there will be future "**generations**" of people born right on into and throughout eternity.

The "**last generation**" referred to in *Psalm 48:13* and *Psalm 78:4*, and "**this generation**" in *Matthew 24:34*, then has to be understood in the light of God's great "Plan of the Ages." In His great plan, the Lord appointed six days [*6,000 years...2 Peter 3:8*] for mankind to prove themselves capable of handling all the affairs of man upon the earth, as they labor upon the earth. See *Exodus 20:9-11, 23:12, 31:15, 34:21, 35:2, Leviticus 23:3*, and *Deuteronomy 5:13-14*. In these 6,000 years the only thing mankind has proven, is that humanity is a total failure without the presence and leadership of Almighty God.

Now we are living in "**the last generation**" of the "Dispensation of Grace" [*Ephesians 3:2*], "**the last generation**" of "**the times of the Gentiles**" [*Luke 21:24*], and "**the last generation**" in which man's leadership shall prevail upon the earth. All future "**generations**" shall be under the direct leadership and administration of the Lord Himself. Praise God! Glory to God! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Corinthians 15:57. Hallelujah!

The Prophetic Significance

In the *Book of Deuteronomy* and the *Book of Joshua* there is a parallel to "**this generation**" that I believe is prophetically significant. Let me briefly call it to the attention of our readers.

I urge our readers to carefully study the chronological record of events involving Israel, as recorded in *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy*.

Moses led Israel out of Egypt 2,513 years after the creation of Adam. Due to their unbelief and rebellion, the Israelites spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness. As the end of that forty years was approaching, Moses began delivering his final messages

to Israel on the 1st day of Shevat, the 11th month on the Jewish calendar, ***Deuteronomy 1:3***. The ministry of Moses was concluded and he died on the last day of that same month; the Jewish month of Shevat, ***Deuteronomy 34:5-7***. The children of Israel mourned for Moses 30 days, the whole month of Adar on the Jewish calendar, ***Deuteronomy 34:8***.

Then on the 1st day of Abib [Nisan] on the Jewish calendar [*a new year*], the Lord commissioned Joshua to take the children of Israel across the Jordan into the "Promised Land," ***Joshua 1:1-9***. Ten days later on the 10th day of Abib, the children of Israel came up out of the Jordan river and entered the "Promised Land," ***Joshua 4:19***.

Because many of God's people don't seriously study Bible chronology, they don't realize that almost immediately after entering the "Promised Land," the Israelites began fighting a war against their enemies that lasted seven (7) years.

Folks, it certainly appears to me that there is a parallel between Israel's first 40 year "generation" and this ***"last generation"*** that we are living in today.

Forty years ago [1967] Israel regained control of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple mount. At that time they had an opportunity to rebuild their Temple and renew their covenant with their God. But because of the unbelief of their leaders, those unbelieving leaders gave most of the territory they had gained, including their beloved Temple Mount, to their sworn enemies. Over these past 40 years Israel has continued in ***"spiritual blindness"***, wandering in this world, always seeking "peace," but finding none, and being constantly hated and oppressed by their enemies. Now here at the end of ***"this generation,"*** Israel still faces the 7 years of Tribulation. Is there not a parallel to be seen here?

Conclusion

Folks, I make no claim to knowing ***"that day and hour"*** when the Lord is coming. All I know is what the Lord Himself said about the ***"Parable of the Fig Tree."*** I have done my best to ***"faithfully"*** share His Word with our readers, ***Jeremiah 23:28***.

Based on these statements of our Lord, I do know that we are living in the **last two weeks** of the **last month** of the **last year** of ***"this generation"*** on our Gentile calendar. There yet remains some three months of this year on the Jewish calendar. That isn't long!

Folks, this next year [2008] life on earth is going to change! The change will be beyond what anyone has dreamed of or even imagined. The "signs" of such a change are all about us, and can easily be seen by those who are seriously studying God's Word and watching world events.

Every area of life as we have known it in the past is on the very verge of total collapse. There is no question in my mind that the collapse will come **in 2008**, and it will come

with increasing speed. The economy will collapse, our money will become worthless, more businesses and factories will close, thousands of people will be without work, gas and food shortages will develop, utilities [*gas; water; electric*] will fail, all forms of communication will break down [*even your computer*], crime will mushroom, law enforcement and governmental authority will break down, and people will be left to their own resources to provide for themselves and their families or starve and die. Marshal law will very likely be declared. Humanity is now facing a time unlike anything they have ever seen before in human history. If any reader doesn't believe this, it won't change the truth one bit. Just keep breathing and you will see it for yourself.

But don't despair! In this dark forecast there is a bright side.

I am personally expecting the Lord to come through Heaven's "**door**" and rescue [*rapture*] His people [*true believers*] **in 2008**. He may come just before "**this generation**" ends, or just after, but He is coming, **Luke 21:28**.

"For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."
(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Again, in **Revelation 3:10** the Lord said to His church, "**Because thou hast kept the Word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation [*testing*], which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."**

Folks, I would emphasize to you again.....we are living in the last two weeks of the last month of the last year of "**this generation**" on our Gentile calendar. It is time for God's people to "**look up**" and get serious about living for the Lord.

It is also time for every lost sinner [*one who has never received Christ as their own personal Savior*] to get serious about seeking the Lord for the salvation of your soul. Quit playing games with God. Since the Lord uses the Jewish calendar in prophetic reckoning, you may have three more months to "**prepare to meet thy God**," and you may not even have another day. God have mercy!

If any reader needs spiritual help, I would count it a blessing if you would call on me. I will do everything I know to do to help you find Christ as your own personal Savior, or to help you find assurance of your salvation. The Lord Jesus Christ is coming very soon. Don't put it off. Get the eternal destiny of your soul settled NOW.

May God grant every reader GRACE is my prayer.



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