

## Review

Jesus has briefed four of His disciples regarding the Tribulation, a seven-year period of time when the antichrist will be revealed, and the persecution of the Jews will be unprecedented and world-wide. It is a time when Christ will return at the second coming, and will establish His kingdom on earth.

When will all this happen? Jesus tells them in the next three verses.

### **24:32-34 This Generation**

Jesus' statement that "this generation will not pass away until all these things take place" has confused a lot of people. They read "this generation" as being the generation which was around when Jesus was speaking. They interpret "this generation" as being "the generation right now, our generation, My generation."

And, because the temple was destroyed less than forty years later, and many of the Jews were killed, many think that this must have been the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy.

- But Jesus hasn't been talking about the destruction of the temple in the Olivet Discourse. That was simply the statement which prompted the disciples to ask about the end times.

- Second, the persecution of the Jews in 70AD was not of the magnitude of the holocaust in World War II, and Jesus said that it would be...

**Matt. 24:21 "...such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will."**

- Third, the world has not yet seen the supernatural events promised, things like the sun being darkened, the moon not giving its light, the stars falling from the sky, and the powers of the heavens being shaken (Matt. 24:29).

- Fourth, Jesus has not returned for the world to see, like lightning coming from the east and flashing to the west (Matt. 24:27).

- And fifth, all the tribes of the earth have not mourned over the return of Christ.

So, we can see that the generation which would see all those things

take place was not the generation to whom Jesus was speaking.

So which generation was He talking about?

### **The Generation Who Sees**

A large number of Bible commentators who address this issue simply say that "this generation" is the generation who sees these things take place. In other words, "those people who see the antichrist defile the temple are the same generation that will see Jesus return."

I agree with the premise, but not the interpretation. I agree with the premise because certainly the same generation that sees the beginning of the tribulation will be the same generation that sees the end of it. It'll happen just seven years later.

However, I disagree with the interpretation. I think that Jesus is saying much more than that. And the reason I think there is more is the fig tree. I believe that the key to understanding this is to understand the fig tree.

### **The Fig Tree**

The fig tree has been used by God throughout the Bible to represent something.

- The first time God mentions the fig tree is in a literal way, as He describes the abundance of the land into which He's leading the Jews (Deut. 8:8). The land of Israel is an abundant land, with an abundance of fig trees.

- In the days of King Solomon, the land of Israel was at peace. The author of 1Kings wrote,

**1Kings 4:25 So Judah and Israel lived in safety, every man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.**

Again, it seems to be a reference to the abundance of the land.

- In the days of King Hezekiah, the Assyrians attacked. The spokesman for the king of Assyria told the people of the southern kingdom of Judah,

**2Kings 18:31-32 "...Thus says the king of Assyria, 'Make your peace with me and come out to me, and eat each of his**

**vine and each of his fig tree and drink each of the waters of his own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own land...'"**

This was a threat that it would be the last of their enjoyment of the land, of the fig trees.

- During the same time period, the northern kingdom of Israel did fall. Hosea had prophesied this, quoting the Lord as saying,

**Hos. 2:12 "I will destroy her vines and fig trees..."**

- We might think that these are just literal fig trees, and not symbols of the land of Israel. However, God goes on to say through Hosea,

**Hos. 9:10 "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first season..."**

And through the prophet Joel, the Lord said of the invading army,

**Joel 1:7 It has made my vine a waste and my fig tree splinters. It has stripped them bare and cast them away...**

- When the Jews of Judea were about to be taken into the Babylonian Captivity, the Lord told Jeremiah to tell the Israelites,

**Jer. 5:15, 17-18 "Behold, I am bringing a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel," declares the LORD ... They will devour your vines and your fig trees; They will demolish with the sword your fortified cities in which you trust. Yet even in those days," declares the LORD, "I will not make you a complete destruction.**

Later in Jeremiah, the Lord equated the Jews with two baskets of figs (Jer. 24:1-10) - a basket of good ones, and a basket of rotten ones. He said that the good figs were the ones that He'd had taken to Babylon. They would be planted back in the land in the future. The rotten figs were the remnant who stayed in Jerusalem, and would run away down to Egypt. They would be destroyed permanently.

Okay, so why have we spent all this time demonstrating that the fig tree represents Israel?

### **When The Branch Puts Forth Its Leaves**

In Jesus' parable, He said that the fig tree, which appeared for

awhile to be dead with stiff branches, no leaves, and no fruit, would become tender and put forth its leaves.

Ever since the destruction of the temple in 70AD, the fig tree appeared dead. Israel was no longer a nation, and the Jews no longer had a homeland. For 1,875 years, the fig tree seemed lifeless.

But God had given Israel a promises for the future, saying,

**Joel 2:21-23 Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad, for the LORD has done great things. Do not fear, beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness have turned green, for the tree has borne its fruit, the fig tree and the vine have yielded in full. So rejoice, O sons of Zion...**

A similar promise was made by God through Zechariah:

**Zech. 3:9-10 "...I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day," declares the LORD of hosts, "every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree."**

The fig tree would one day bud and bloom again.

### **In Need Of A Homeland**

History passed, and Jews around the world suffered at best from isolation and ignoring, and at worst, prejudice and persecution.

In the 1800's some Jews began moving back to the land of Israel, now called "Palestine," meaning, "land of the Philistines." In 1892, there were already about 25,000 Jews living in Jerusalem.

In 1896, Theodor Herzl concluded that in order for the Jews to be safe from this oppression, they needed a homeland of their own. He wrote that Jews needed to return to "their ever-memorable historic home." In 1897, he held a Zionist Congress in Switzerland, which decided to seek for the Jews "a publically recognized, legally secured home in Palestine."

Zionists began to move to Israel from places like Russia, Germany, and Austria. By the 1930's, there was about 400,000 who had come to Israel.

The Jews had also begun learning to speak Hebrew again, even though almost no one spoke it, except for a few Bible scholars.

When World War II began in 1939, the British issued the White Paper, which prevented most of Europe's Jews from immigrating to Palestine. During that war, six million of Europe's Jews were slaughtered by the Nazis. When this knowledge became known world-wide, most nations (except the Arabs) felt a sense of guilt. In 1947, the United Nations proposed a plan of partitioning the land, with the Palestinians getting the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

On the morning of May 14th, 1948, the British removed their flag over the land of Israel, and the flag of Israel was flown. The State of Israel was reborn on that day.

The Arabs fought against it immediately. That very day, Egyptian planes bombed Tel Aviv. Arab armies attacked from all sides. One percent of the Jewish population died in the year-long fight, but in the end, they were victorious, and had occupied not only all of the land that the UN granted to them, but also the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

They were a nation of 640,000 people who fought six nations totaling 30 million people. And they had miraculously won!

Tensions ran high for the next two decades, culminating in May of 1967 when, with the aid of the Soviet Union, Egypt made pacts with several Arab nations (including Iraq, Syria, and Jordan) to fight against Israel. In June of 1967, the Six-Day War began and ended, with Israel again achieving miraculous victory against all odds. They gained even more territory in this war, including the ancient city of Jerusalem, as well as the Biblical "Land of Canaan," which God had promised to the descendants of Abraham thousands of years before.

The fig tree was alive and well, budding and blooming again!

### **The Fig Tree Generation**

These amazing and unprecedented events are, I believe, the fulfillment of Jesus' statement about the fig tree putting forth its leaves. If that is the case, then His promise regarding the end times is that this is the generation - our generation who has seen this happen - will not pass away until the rapture, the Tribulation, and His return!

This is why I adamantly believe we are the last generation of the church, the generation which will be alive for the rapture.

Next week, we will see Jesus emphatically telling us to be ready and watchful, for He is near, right at the door, but the world is otherwise occupied. We must be on the alert!