

# **The Expression “This (That) Generation” (*hē genea hautē*) in the LXX<sup>1</sup> and the NT: Does it Mean a Chronological Generation (25–40 Years)? A Brief Study of a Biblical Expression**

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## **Introduction: A Puzzle Seeking a Solution**

Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. (Mt. 24:34 || Mk 13:30 || Lk. 21:32)<sup>2</sup>

It is common for Bible scholars to understand this saying as a prediction by Jesus that within one generation (something like 25–40 years), the end of the age would come and he would be revealed in glory as the Son of Man of Daniel’s vision in Daniel 7. If that is what he meant, then one of two conclusions follows: (1) Jesus was wrong, and had uttered a failed prophecy, or (2) the end of the age and Jesus’ coming in glory and the prophecy of Daniel 7 mean something very different from what Christians usually imagine them to mean. Preterism is a systematic attempt to interpret the NT in line with conclusion (2), in order to avoid conclusion (1). But the need for a complete re-interpretation of the traditional idea of Jesus’ coming in glory so as to make it refer to the Romans sacking Jerusalem in 70 CE, killing about a million people, only arises if a literal biological generation is what Jesus meant in the first place by “this generation.” My researches have led me to the conclusion that he did not intend to refer in this saying to a chronological generation but rather to a transhistorical and symbolic generation identified by its spiritual condition of faithlessness and resistance to God’s overtures to right relationship.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Otherwise known as the Septuagint. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE Greek translation of the Old Testament. This was the Bible of first-century CE Greek-speaking Jews and Gentile Christians.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations herein are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* copyright © 2001, 2007, 2011, 2016 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>3</sup> Although I reached this conclusion through my own independent study of the use and connotations of the Greek word *genea*, “generation,” in the NT and the LXX and the Hebrew word *dōr* in the Hebrew OT, several other scholars have reached similar conclusions to mine (with differences around various details). Among them are Max Meinertz, “Dieses Geschlecht’ im Neuen Testament [‘This generation’ in the New Testament],” *Biblische Zeitschrift* [NF] 1

This may sound strange on first look, but it makes very good sense when you look at one of the distinctive ways in which the Hebrew word *dōr* (translated straight across in Greek in the LXX as *genea*, generation) is used in the Old Testament, especially the Psalms and the Prophets. We are going to see that Jesus uses the word exclusively in one specific way that some OT writers do—to refer collectively to wicked, faithless people who share what might be called a culture of opposition to God. This culture of opposition is *transhistorical*, which is to say, it is like a connected thread through history, and the people who take part in it span the centuries and even the millennia. Let us look at some key passages to get a sense of the phenomenon of “this generation.”

## Key Biblical Passages Outside of the Synoptic Gospels

### Gen. 7:1

Then the LORD said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in **this generation**.”

Here we have the first biblical example of a wicked, godless “generation.” Noah’s family stands alone in a worldwide culture of violence and godlessness (see Gen. 6:10, 13). With people living so long in the pre-flood world, “this generation” above comprises as many as seven or more biological generations.

### Num. 32:9-14

<sup>9</sup>For when they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the people of Israel from going into the land that the LORD had given them. <sup>10</sup>And the LORD’s anger was kindled on that day, and he swore, saying,

<sup>11</sup>“Surely none of the men who came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, because they have not wholly followed me, <sup>12</sup>none except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the LORD.”

<sup>13</sup>And the LORD’s anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all **the generation** that had done evil in the sight of the LORD was gone. <sup>14</sup>And behold, you have risen in your fathers’

(1957), 283-89; Evald Lövestam, “The ή γενεὰ αὐτῆ Eschatology in Mk 13:30 par.,” in J. Lambrecht, ed., *L’apocalypse johannique et l’apocalypique dans le Nouveau Testament* (BETL, 53; Gembloux: Leuven University Press, 1980), 403-13; Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1997), 742-43 [on Lk. 21:32]; Steffen Jöris, *The Use and Function of genea in the Gospel of Mark: New Light on Mk 13:30* (FzB, 133; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2015).

place, a brood of sinful men, to increase still more the fierce anger of the LORD against Israel!

Here Moses confronts the younger generation that followed the older generation of Israelites who were adults when they were saved out of Egypt. Whereas their parents' generation was faithless, they too are "a brood of sinful men." The spiritually sinful and faithless culture ends up stretching across the two biological generations.

### Deut. 1:35-36

<sup>35</sup> Not one of these men of **this evil generation** shall see the good land that I swore to give to your fathers, <sup>36</sup>except Caleb the son of Jephunneh. He shall see it, and to him and to his children I will give the land on which he has trodden, because he has wholly followed the LORD!

God is referring here to a literal and particular generation: the generation 20 years and older when the Exodus and the wilderness wanderings started (cf. Num. 14:29-32). As we will see below, the faithless wilderness generation becomes a type, a pattern, and an example of (the majority of) people in the community of faith who have God's salvation dramatically offered to them, but respond to it with faithless cynicism and disobedience. "This generation" thus manifests itself down through history and finds itself described at various times in Scripture by the words evil, perverse, stubborn, rebellious, unrighteous, adulterous, stiff-necked, unbelieving, and unfaithful.

### Ps. 12:1-2, 7-8

<sup>1</sup>Save, O LORD, for the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man.

<sup>2</sup>Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak. ...

<sup>7</sup>You, O LORD, will keep them; you will guard us from **this generation** forever.

<sup>8</sup>On every side the wicked prowl, as vileness is exalted among the children of man.

In this psalm, it is clear that "this generation" refers to the sinful culture in which "the godly one is gone." Everyone in this culture "utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak" (vv. 1-2). "This generation" represents a transhistorical collective and culture that is so sinful that it represents a life-threatening danger to those who are faithful to God and so requires God's protection "forever" (v. 7), down through the biological and chronologically limited generations.

## Ps. 14:2-5

<sup>2</sup>The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.

<sup>3</sup>They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.

<sup>4</sup>Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread and do not call upon the LORD?

<sup>5</sup>There they are in great terror, for God is with **the generation of the righteous.**

Just as there is a transhistorical wicked “generation” that represents the overwhelming majority (Ps. 12:7—described here in Psalm 14 in very similar terms but without using the word “generation”), so there is a transhistorical “generation” that is righteous, which could be called “the faithful remnant.” The two “generations” are not, in this kind of usage, biological-temporal generations, but rather two groups with entirely different spiritual characters. The one is wicked, dishonest, unjust, rapacious, faithless, godless; the other is faithful and obedient to God.

## Ps. 24:3-6

<sup>3</sup>Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?

<sup>4</sup>He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.

<sup>5</sup>He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

<sup>6</sup>Such is **the generation of those who seek him**, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.<sup>4</sup>

Here, as in Psalm 24, the word “generation” connotes the transhistorical collective that is constituted by their common allegiance and obedience to God, not a biological-temporal generation.

## Ps. 78:1-8

<sup>1</sup>Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth!

<sup>2</sup>I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old,

<sup>3</sup>things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us.

<sup>4</sup>We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.

<sup>4</sup> Gr. *autē hē genea zētouントōn auton zētouントōn to prosōpon tou theou Iakōb* (LXX).

<sup>5</sup>He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children,  
<sup>6</sup>that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children,  
<sup>7</sup>so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments;  
<sup>8</sup>and that they should not be like their fathers, **a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.**

Here the psalmist is looking back on the “generation” that experienced the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the law (v. 8) as a “type,” a kind of paradigmatic example, of a trend or mentality of stubbornness, rebelliousness, double-mindedness, and lack of faith and loyalty. He says he will speak a *parable*, which implies that he sees a current application of the story of the faithless wilderness generation: “We will not hide [the old mysterious sayings] from their children...” (v. 4). There is an implicit sense here that the spirit of that “stubborn and rebellious generation” manifests itself in every biological generation, and must be resisted.

### Ps. 95:7d-11

<sup>7d</sup>Today, if you hear his voice, <sup>8</sup>do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,  
<sup>9</sup>when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.  
<sup>10</sup>For forty years I loathed **that generation** and said, “They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways.”  
<sup>11</sup>Therefore I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter my rest.”

The psalmist here warns the people of his time, many centuries after the Exodus, that they must not fall into the same faithless, hard-hearted attitude that their ancestors took in the desert. We will see that the author of the New Testament Epistle to the Hebrews makes explicit use of this idea—that the same issues confront people of every era, along with the same risk of finding oneself loathed by God and excluded from the promised inheritance of God.

### Ps. 112:1-2

<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments!  
<sup>2</sup>His offspring will be mighty in the land; **the generation of the upright will be blessed.**

This is another psalm that speaks of the transhistorical (non-biological, non-temporal) generation of the faithful, here blessed for their right behavior.<sup>5</sup>

### Jer. 2:31-32

<sup>31</sup>And you, **O generation**, behold the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness to Israel, or a land of thick darkness? Why then do my people say, “We are free, we will come no more to you”?

<sup>32</sup>Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

Here the LORD addresses Israel, *in its state of centuries-long self-alienation from God*, as “O generation.” The God-rejecting generation seems to span history from the time of the wilderness wanderings all the way to the addressees’ generation and further, to their “children’s children” (Jer. 2:1-9). God is using the word *dōr* (generation) in a distinctly negative, typological, transhistorical sense—almost making it equivalent to “my people” (2:31b, 32b) when they are stubbornly resistant to being loved by God.

### Heb. 3:6–4:13

<sup>3:7</sup> Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear his voice, <sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, <sup>9</sup> where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I was provoked with **that generation**, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.’ <sup>11</sup> As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’”

The author is quoting Ps. 95:7-11 (see above). Note again the negative connotation of generation (Gr. *genea*) with the demonstrative pronoun (in this case “that generation,” *hē genea ekeinē*).

<sup>12</sup> Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. <sup>13</sup> But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. <sup>14</sup> For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. <sup>15</sup> As it is said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

The author understands that not only the biological generation of the wilderness wanderings and biological generation of the author of Psalm 95, but also his own biological generation have the challenge to stay true to God and not find themselves being the generation that God loathed/loathes.

<sup>5</sup> Lit. uprightness, Heb. *yashar*.

<sup>16</sup> For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? <sup>17</sup> And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? <sup>18</sup> And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? <sup>19</sup> So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

The author says that what separates the rejected from the accepted is *faith*. All experience the same gift of salvation and revelation of the faithful love of God, but some wallow in cynicism, holding onto their hardened hearts. The historical situation is different—the one generation experienced the miraculous deliverance from slavery and genocide in Egypt; the other, the current, generation experiences the miraculous delivery from sin accomplished by Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, but without faith, the salvation does not benefit the cynical:

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. <sup>2</sup> For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.<sup>6</sup> <sup>3</sup> For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest,’” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.

<sup>6</sup> Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, <sup>7</sup> again he appoints a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” <sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.

When the author references “another day” spoken of by God, he is thinking of God’s voice in Ps. 95:7 (see above).

<sup>9</sup> So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, <sup>10</sup> for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

<sup>11</sup> Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

Just as the call to faith and obedience and the risk of faithless cynicism and disobedience still lay fresh in front of the new biological generation of the covenant at the very end of the 40 years of wilderness wandering (compare Exod. 17:1-7; Deut. 6:13-19; 9:22–10:12) and still lay fresh in front of the people in the time of the writer of Psalm 95, so the author of Hebrews says this same challenge and risk lies fresh before those who are experiencing the good things of the New Covenant. He

<sup>6</sup> Or, “because it (the message) was not united with faith within them.”

warns that even as a professing Christian you can find yourself part of “that generation,” which through its faithlessness and disobedience failed to enter the promised land (see, on this theme, Heb. 6:4-8; 10:26-31).

### Wis. 3:17-19 (without the demonstrative pronoun)

<sup>17</sup> Even if [sinners] live long they will be held of no account, and finally their old age will be without honor. <sup>18</sup> If they die young, they will have no hope and no consolation on the day of judgment. <sup>19</sup> For the end of **an unrighteous generation** is grievous.<sup>7</sup>

This text, in the apocryphal book The Book of Wisdom (also known as The Wisdom of Solomon), uses “an unrighteous generation” to mean “the type of people who are unrighteous.” The author states a generalization that he believes applies throughout history to unrighteous people—they have a bad end.

### Phil. 2:14-16 (without the demonstrative pronoun)

<sup>14</sup> Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, <sup>15</sup> children of God without blemish in the midst of **a crooked<sup>8</sup> and twisted<sup>9</sup> generation**, among whom you shine as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup> holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

Paul here writes to a mixed Jewish and Gentile community of believers, and it seems that he may be seeing the unbelieving world in general—not simply the unbelieving Jews—as the crooked and twisted generation that is persecuting them (Phil. 1:28-30). Paul, after all, found that the Gentiles were at many points just as intensely hostile to his preaching of the gospel as the Jews (e.g. Acts 14:5-6; 16:16; 19:23-41). By combining the word *generation* with *crooked* and *twisted*, he evokes the wilderness generation addressed by Moses in Deut. 32:32 and makes those who are persecuting the Philippians symbolically a part of that transhistorical salvation-rejecting generation (cf. also Deut. 1:35-36).

### Summary: Key Biblical Passages

In the Hebrew Old Testament, the word *dōr* is used not only in a normal and literal sense, connoting a biological-temporal generation, but also—in the Psalms and the Prophets—in a figurative, typological sense that conveys the idea of a transhistorical, spiritual shared identity. Thus the righteous and faithful down through the centuries can be called “the generation of the upright,” and the faithless and unrepentant down through the centuries can be called “a stubborn and rebellious

<sup>7</sup> LXX *genea gar adikou calepa ta telē*.

<sup>8</sup> Gr. *skolios*, which modifies *genea*, generation, in Deut. 32:5 LXX and Ps. 78:8 LXX, as well as Acts 2:40.

<sup>9</sup> Gr. *diestrammenē*, which modifies *genea*, generation, in Deut. 32:5 LXX.

generation” or simply “this generation.” Sometimes the spiritual typology of “generation” is positive (e.g. Ps. 14:5; 24:6; 112:2), in the specific sense of loyalty to God and righteousness, and sometimes the typology is negative, in the specific sense of disloyalty and cynical faithlessness in relation to God (Ps. 12:7; 78:5; 95:10; Jer. 2:31). In the LXX, the Greek Old Testament, we find that the expression “this generation” with the demonstrative pronoun after the noun (Gk. *hē genea hautē*) *in every instance* connotes sinful, God-rejecting people (almost always Israelites, but cf. Gen. 7:1).<sup>10</sup> The same pattern holds in the New Testament. Although the word *genea* (generation) occurs a few times in its ordinary literal meaning,<sup>11</sup> *it never so appears in Jesus’ mouth*, and in fact, in Jesus’ mouth it almost always occurs in the expression “this generation,” with or without a qualifying adjective such as “sinful,” “wicked,” “unbelieving,” or “adulterous.” Every single time he uses the word “generation,” in fact, the context is negative and the word appears to refer to people with no faith in and loyalty to God.<sup>12</sup>

In the Gospels, in the mouth of Jesus, with the one theoretically possible exception of Mt. 24:34 || Mk 13:30 || Lk. 21:32, the contested saying, every single instance of the expression “this generation” connotes sinful, faithless Israelites that cynically reject Jesus’ message and person—and thereby reject God. Even Mt. 24:34 is readily interpreted in this light due to the nearby presence of Mt. 23:36, which makes it plausible that Jesus is using it with the same connotation in mind.

## Examining Mt. 23:36 in Context, Beginning with Mt. 23:28

### Mt. 23:28

<sup>28</sup>[You Scribes and Pharisees] outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

This pattern—of the people who are supposed to be God’s people, the saved and sanctified people, being false and rebellious towards God—is the very pattern that is associated both in the OT and in the teaching of Jesus with the phrase “this generation.”

<sup>10</sup> Gen. 7:1; Num. 32:13; Deut. 1:35; Ps. 12:7; 95:10; Jer. 8:3.

<sup>11</sup> See Mt. 1:17; Lk. 1:48, 50; Acts 13:36; 14:16; 15:21; Eph. 3:5, 21.

<sup>12</sup> In 22 of the 25 instances of *genea* in Jesus’ mouth, it unquestionably refers to people of no loyalty to God. A special case occurs in Lk. 16:8, where Jesus says, “For the sons of this world are shrewder in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.” “The sons of light” clearly refers to those who collectively live in loyalty to God, and “the sons of this world” clearly refers to people who collectively live in self-alienation from God. Their own *genea* here unmistakably means “their own kind,” in the non-temporal, non-biological sense we have been observing. The only three potential exceptions are the (nearly identical) Matthew, Mark, and Luke versions of the saying, “Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” I will argue below that the context of the Olivet Discourse conspicuously supports the negative and transhistorical sense of the word, providing strong evidence that these three instances (really one saying reported three times) conform to the completely consistent pattern of Jesus’ usage elsewhere.

## Mt. 23:29-32

<sup>29</sup> Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, <sup>30</sup>saying, “If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.” <sup>31</sup>Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. <sup>32</sup>Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers.

In a way that fully resonates with the connotation of “this generation” in the OT, Jesus appeals here to the idea that the rebellious and the God-hating share a transhistorical connection, a commonality, a negative spiritual bond down through time analogous to the bond of family lineage. Jesus’ contemporaries like to think they are different from the previous faithless generations in their nation’s history that rejected God’s good things and murdered God’s messengers. Jesus’ contemporaries have a high opinion of themselves, but that is indicative of nothing. Jesus essentially says to them, as he will say to Judas (Jn 13:27), “Do what you are going to do. Carry on and finish the work of murderously opposing God’s representatives that your ancestors started.” In this case, their hatred of God will not simply express itself through the persecution of God’s messengers—in this case, the Messenger is God the Son, and so they attack God himself in the person of Jesus.<sup>13</sup> He goes on:

## Mt. 23:33-36

<sup>33</sup> You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to Gehenna?<sup>14</sup> <sup>34</sup>Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, <sup>35</sup>so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. <sup>36</sup>Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon **this generation**.

Jesus here prophesies to the murderous and God-rejecting generation as though he is addressing it as a whole in its transhistorical identity. He is certainly *not* saying that his contemporaries will be held responsible for and punished for the murder of every innocent person slain from Abel to Zechariah. Still less is he saying that Israel or the Jews are all against God and are being rejected across the board. He speaking to those among his contemporaries who hold to traditions that go directly against the spirit of the Law that they purport to enshrine and who reject him and reject the good news, and he is confronting them as those who have proven themselves to be

<sup>13</sup> On this, see e.g. the Parable of the Tenants (Mt. 21:33-44; Mk 12:1-11; Lk. 20:9-18) and Jn 15:54.

<sup>14</sup> ESV has “hell” here, which is a misleading substitution.

members of “this generation,” that large section of the nominal people of God down through history since Abel who have rejected God’s grace *and who are destined to continue to do so* (v. 34).<sup>15</sup> This is not just an angry denunciation—Jesus is voicing profound grief that the saving love of God, which he has come to express, finds no welcome in those of stubborn heart:

### **Mt. 23:37-39**

<sup>37</sup> O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

<sup>38</sup> See, your house is left to you desolate.

<sup>39</sup> For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Jesus is prophesying here that most—indeed, all but a remnant—of the Jews of Jerusalem will continue in their stubborn blindness to who he is until the moment when he comes in glory (cf. Ps. 118:21-26; Zech. 12:10–13:1). In other words, the transhistorical spiritual faithlessness dynamic of “this generation” will continue to manifest itself right up to the end of this age.

Immediately after this prophecy Jesus gets up to leave the Temple. As he is heading for the exit, his disciples start enthusing about the glorious architecture of the Temple building, and his response is to say it is all coming down:

### **Mt. 24:1-2 || Mk 13:1-2 || Lk. 21:5-6**

Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple.<sup>16</sup> But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

Then, as Jesus sits with his disciples on the Mount of Olives, an eight-minute walk away, they ask him about his prediction of the destruction of the Temple (and the desolation of Jerusalem, 23:38) and about the signs that will attend “end of the age.” Jesus responds by giving the talk that we call the Olivet Discourse. The Olivet Discourse is thus framed within a conversation sparked off by Jesus’ statement that the Temple is going to be destroyed, and that remark itself comes right on the heels

<sup>15</sup> The principle that the majority of those nominally part of the community of the redeemed will, in actuality, have hearts set against God and God’s true messengers applies 100% to the Gentile church. It is not a specifically Hebrew or Jewish principle, but a principle that applies to the nature of human beings as human beings. See the section **The Grave Danger of Antisemitism**, below.

<sup>16</sup> In parallel to Mt. 24:1, Mark has “And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!’ ” Luke has “some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings.”

of his denunciation of God-and-Jesus-rejecting religious leaders and a sorrowful prophecy that the people of Jerusalem will not see him (or, perhaps, recognize him as who he truly is) until they greet him as their glorious Messiah (Mt. 23:37-39). About three minutes into his talk about the signs of the end of the age and his coming on the clouds as the Danielic “Son of Man,”<sup>17</sup> he says, “Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.”

Given the specific and immediate context for the Olivet Discourse, it is not difficult at all to see Jesus’ use of *hē genea hautē*, “this generation,” in Mt. 24:34 and parallels fitting in with the totally consistent connotation of this and closely related phrases in his usage. The phrase “this generation” would then function to tie Jesus’ prophecy of his glorious coming on the clouds as Son of Man in Mt. 24:30 back to his statement in Mt. 23:37-39 that rejection of him by the Jewish majority would not come to an end until he came in his glory.<sup>18</sup> In terms of Jesus’ use of the expression, it makes perfect sense.

### **The Extraordinary Consistency of the Synoptic Gospels and their Sources as Regards *This Generation***

Back in 1980 or 1981, during my MA studies, I had a conversation with Joe Trafton, a New Testament professor with a specialty in intertestamental and apocalyptic literature. I mentioned that I thought the expression “this generation will not pass away until all these things take place” in Mt. 24:34 meant that the Jews, despite the persecutions predicted in Matthew 24, would be preserved from extinction as a people until Jesus came in glory. He shut my theory down with one short sentence: “Jesus said ‘until,’ not ‘even though.’” In other words, Jesus predicted the endurance of “this generation” up to, but not through, his coming in glory. “This generation,” like “heaven and earth” as we know them (24:35), would pass away, would come to an end. I realized I had to go back to the drawing board, because Jesus clearly believed that a remnant of faithful Jews would survive to enjoy the glories of the fully-manifested Kingdom. As I re-read the references to *genea* in the gospels, I began to form the sense that “this generation” might in effect connote the broad majority of the Jews, the nominal people of God, *in a state of faithlessness and stubborn rejection of God’s salvation*. As I contemplated this idea, I thought to myself, “That seems awfully specific—it essentially amounts to the hypothesis that ‘this generation’ is a self-conscious technical term in Jesus’ speech.” As I considered

<sup>17</sup> See Daniel 7.

<sup>18</sup> Paul shows that he himself believes Jesus will continue to be rejected by the majority of his countrymen until “the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” (Rom. 11:25). He calls this situation “a partial hardening [that] has come upon Israel.” But after God has brought the predestined full complement of Gentiles into the fold of the faithful, Paul believes that “all Israel will be saved, as it is written, ‘The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob; and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins’” (Rom. 11:26; Isa. 59:20; 27:9; Jer. 31:33-34).

what sort of evidence might lend appropriate and adequate support to this specific hypothesis, I decided that the strongest possible evidential result would be if every known source of the Synoptic Gospels showed awareness of this particular association of *genea* with the idea of resistance to God and stubborn lack of faith. Then I went and looked. I discovered that this specific, stubbornly faithless, God-and-Jesus-rejecting connotation for the expression *hē genea hautē* is not only the one exclusive meaning of the word *genea* in the mouth of Jesus (outside the contested instance, Mt. 24:34 and parallels, Mk 13:31; Lk. 21:32), but it also occurs in sayings found in *all five synoptic sources*: (1) the triple tradition—Matthew, Mark, and Luke agreeing, (2) Matthew’s special materials, (3) Mark’s special materials, (4) the double tradition, also known as Q—Matthew and Luke agreeing together without a parallel in Mark, and (5) Luke’s special materials. Here are all its instances, organized by source.

### **The Triple Tradition (Matthew || Mark || Luke)**

#### **Mt. 17:17 || Mk 9:19 || Lk. 9:41**

<sup>17</sup> “You **unbelieving and perverse<sup>19</sup> generation**,” Jesus replied, “How long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.”

<sup>19</sup> “You **unbelieving generation**,” Jesus replied, “How long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

<sup>41</sup> “You **unbelieving and perverse<sup>20</sup> generation**,” Jesus replied, “How long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.”

### **Matthew Special Materials**

#### **Mt. 12:43-45 (45b)**

Compare Mt. 12:43-45 with Lk. 11:24-26; Matthew alone uses the phrase “this wicked generation” (cf. Num. 32:13; Deut. 1:35) in the saying:

<sup>43</sup> When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. <sup>44</sup> Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Deut. 32:5 for the word *diestrammenē*, “perverse” (or “twisted,” a participle from Gr. *diastrefō*, translating Heb. *pethaltol*) modifying the word generation (Heb. *dōr*, Gr. *genea*) and referring to the rebellious among the Hebrews. Similarly in Deut. 32:20 *exestrammennuē*, a participle from *ekstrefō* (translating Heb. *tahpukōth*), meaning perversity or dishonesty, is used in referring to the rebellious among the Hebrews along with the word generation. In Isa. 59:8 the ways of the unfaithful of Israel are described as “perverse” (Heb. ‘*aqash*, Gr. *diestrammenai*) in context with the metaphor of a brood of (poisonous) snakes (59:5; cf. Mt. 23:33-37).

<sup>20</sup> Luke quotes Stephen using the epithet *sklērotracēlos*, literally meaning “stiff-necked,” in Acts 7:51, associating those who are persecuting him with all those who have rejected God’s ways and God’s messengers up to and including Jesus. In the LXX, *sklērotracēlos* translates Heb. *qasheh*, hard-necked, perverse, in Exod. 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut. 9:6, 13; Prov. 29:1.

left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. <sup>45</sup> Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with **this wicked generation**.

#### **Mt. 16:1-4 (cf. Lk. 11:16, 29-30; 12:54-56)**

The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.

<sup>2</sup> He replied, “When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,’ <sup>3</sup> and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. <sup>4</sup> **A wicked and adulterous generation** looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.” Jesus then left them and went away.

Whereas Luke has “This generation is an evil generation” in Lk. 11:29, Matthew alone quotes Jesus using the phrase “wicked *and adulterous* generation” both here and in Mt. 12:39. Not only is the theme of the unfaithfulness of (most in) Israel/Judah a recurring one in OT prophecy,<sup>21</sup> but it is also associated with the word *dōr* (generation): “And he [YHWH] said, ‘I will hide my face from them; I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness’” (Deut. 32:20). “...they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God” (Ps. 78:8).

#### **Mark Special Materials**

#### **Mark 8:11-12**

<sup>11</sup> The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. <sup>12</sup> He sighed deeply and said, “Why does **this generation** ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it.”

Apparently this is a unique version of a kind of encounter that occurred on a number of occasions during Jesus’ ministry (note, for comparison, the fact that Matthew records two challenges: Mt. 12:38; 16:1). Mark’s saying is unique in (1) its curtness—no reference to the sign of Jonah (2) the use of “truly I say to you” (*amēn legō humin*), and (3) the flat refusal with an oath, *ei dothēsetai tē genea tautē*. It’s clear from the way Jesus acts in this minimal interaction that he regards their demand

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., Jer. 3:8-12; 13:27; Ezek. 23:37, 43; Hos. 2:2; 4:13.

for a sign as cynical (i.e. faithless) and as representative of the faithless mentality of “this generation.”

### Mk 8:38

For if anyone is ashamed of me and my words **in this adulterous and sinful generation**, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Mark alone has the phrase “in this adulterous and sinful generation” in this saying (cf. the closest parallels in M and L: Mt. 16:24-28 || Lk. 9:23-27).

### The Double Tradition (Matthew || Luke, aka “Q”)

#### Mt. 11:16-19 || Lk. 7:31-34

<sup>16</sup> To what can I compare **this generation**? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

<sup>17</sup> ““We played the pipe for you,  
and you did not dance;  
we sang a dirge,  
and you did not mourn.”

<sup>18</sup> For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He has a demon.”

<sup>19</sup> The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, “Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.”

<sup>31</sup> Jesus went on to say, “To what, then, can I compare the people of **this generation**? What are they like? <sup>32</sup> They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other:

‘We played the pipe for you,  
and you did not dance;  
we sang a dirge,  
and you did not cry.’

<sup>33</sup> For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ <sup>34</sup> The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’”

The key theme of this Q passage is the *cynicism* of “this generation.” They can’t be pleased. They manage to reject God’s messengers on whatever pretext is handy—even if it is exactly the opposite of the pretext they used last time. John is an ascetic and they sneer at him for that; Jesus is no ascetic, and they sneer at him for that.

## Mt. 12:38-42 || Lk. 11:16, 29-32

<sup>38</sup> Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.”

<sup>39</sup> He answered, “A **wicked and adulterous generation** asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. <sup>40</sup> For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. <sup>41</sup> The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with **this generation** and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here. <sup>42</sup> The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with **this generation** and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here.”

<sup>16</sup> Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven.

<sup>29</sup> As the crowds increased, Jesus said, “This is a **wicked generation**. It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. <sup>30</sup> For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to **this generation**.

<sup>31</sup> The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of **this generation** and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom; and now something greater than Solomon is here. <sup>32</sup> The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with **this generation** and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and now something greater than Jonah is here.”

## Mt. 23:32-36 || Lk. 11:49-51

<sup>32</sup> Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!

<sup>33</sup> You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? <sup>34</sup> Therefore I am sending you prophets and sages and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. <sup>35</sup> And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. <sup>36</sup> Truly I tell you, all this will come on **this generation**.

<sup>49</sup> Because of this, God in his wisdom said, “I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.”

<sup>50</sup> Therefore **this generation** will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, <sup>51</sup> from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, **this generation** will be held responsible for it all.

This saying, in both Matthew and Luke, exhibits the characterological and transhistorical senses of *genea*. Jesus is saying that those who are conspiring to murder him are one lineage, one culture, with those who have murderously opposed those who are loyal to God and those who speak for God down through history—from Abel on. All of these will share the same guilt because in some mysterious way they are all, down through the ages, confederates with one another in God’s eyes.

## Luke Special Materials

### Lk. 17:24

<sup>24</sup> For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by **this generation**.

The first sentence here is parallel to Mt. 24:27; the second is unique to Luke.

### Summary of Results:

#### ***Genea* in the Five Synoptic Sources for the Words of Jesus**

When we examine Jesus’ use of the word *generation*<sup>22</sup> in the Synoptic Gospels, we discover that the evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke personally, as sensitive composers and editors of their own materials, and behind them the tradent(s)<sup>23</sup> responsible for Q, the material common to Matthew and Luke, and any oral or written sources for sayings of Jesus that all three of them inherited—all these individuals and traditions understand that *genea* has the same specific negative force when Jesus uses it.<sup>24</sup> *This is no coincidence.* Every synoptic source who gathered and transmitted Jesus’ teachings demonstrates awareness that when Jesus used the word *generation*, he used it with a particular theological connotation with deep roots in the Old Testament. Jesus used it to refer to the mainstream culture among the people of God that was characterized by stubborn resistance to God down through the centuries, in the very midst of God’s reaching out to communicate with them and save them. This culture of rejection of God and God’s ways, Jesus prophesied, would not finally come to an end until all the tribulations (and persecutions of the faithful) that he was describing had come to pass. Only at the moment he comes in glory, when “heaven and earth will pass away,” and God brings forth the new creation, the *palingenesis* (Mt. 19:28; cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22), will “this generation” come to an end.

<sup>22</sup> In Aramaic, Jesus’ everyday language, *generation* would be *dar*, used equivalently to *dōr* in Hebrew, and rendered in the Greek NT as *genea*.

<sup>23</sup> I.e. individuals and groups that carefully maintain and hand down oral and/or written traditions.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew himself uses *genea* in its ordinary meaning of a biological generation when he is writing about Jesus’ family tree (see Mt. 1:17 [2x]), and Luke has Mary (Lk. 1:48, 50) and Paul (Acts 13:36) using it in this way, and he has Paul and James using it in other familiar—and neutral—OT senses (Acts 14:6; 15:21).

## Conclusion: Preterism is Not Needed to Protect Jesus from Being Mistaken

What is the point of all of this? I do not deny that many of Jesus' prophetic sayings have some important level of fulfillment in the woes of the Jewish War (e.g. "no stone on another"<sup>25</sup> and "flee into the hills"<sup>26</sup>). But multiple fulfillments are a normal feature of biblical prophecy, including the prophecies of Jesus. Jesus himself said that the woes and tribulations leading up to the end of the age would be like labor pains, which come in intense waves and then ease off—in other words, **the world crisis that will characterize the end of the age will be prefigured by similar periodic crises that will increase in intensity as they lead up to the final end.** Because I understand that *hē genea hautē*, in Jesus' mouth, always connotes the Jewish/Israeli communal culture of estrangement from God and their Messiah, I don't need for the prophecies of Matthew 23–25 and parallels to be exhausted in the troubles connected with the Jewish War in order to protect Jesus from having made an erroneous prediction. He's not saying that he's coming in his final glory as Messiah within about 25–40 years; he's saying that the situation in which the great majority of Jews reject him as their Messiah will last right up until he comes in his final glory. All of this ties—without the terminology—to Paul's teaching that the Jews, in general, are predestined continue to reject Jesus for nearly all of the current age, but then, at the end of the age, a chosen remnant will collectively turn to God through Jesus and be saved (Rom. 11:25–27; cf. Zech. 12:10–13:1). Jesus' prediction, understood in this way, also continues to be consistently fulfilled down through the centuries to this day. There has never—since the first generation of immediate converts to Jesus among the Jews associated with Pentecost—been a largescale revival of belief in Jesus as Messiah among the Jews. Jews who come to believe in Jesus (e.g. "Jews for Jesus") do so in small numbers and are immediately shunned by their former coreligionists as having apostatized from the Jewish faith. Jesus predicted that this would be the case. Preterism turns out to be an elaborate solution without an actual problem.

## The Grave Danger of Antisemitism

Antisemitism is prejudice and (hidden or overt) ill will against the Jews on the part of Gentiles. Ascribing to the Jews as a people a supposedly predestined hardening against the God that most of them believe in is not a matter to be trifled with. Isaiah, Jesus, and Paul did it, but it is not the same when a Gentile does it. I have learned to trust my Black friends when they tell me there exists among white people a pervasive mentality of prejudice against and ascription of bad motives to Black people. And in

<sup>25</sup> Mt. 24:2; Mk 13:2; Lk. 19:43–44; 21:6.

<sup>26</sup> Mt. 24:15–16; Mk 13:14; Lk. 21:21–22.

trusting their perception of reality, my eyes have been opened. In a similar way I acknowledge the perception of Jewish people when they say antisemitism is pervasive among Gentiles—notwithstanding the fact that it is often unconscious.

Several presentations of preterism that I have seen show themselves to be grossly anti-Semitic. They assert that God completely rejected the Jews because of their rejection of and crucifixion of Jesus, so that they now no have no chosen identity in God's eyes, but are outcast as a people—contradicting Paul's statement that “the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:28-29). They assert that when the Romans besieged and destroyed Jerusalem in 70 CE, killing perhaps nearly a million men, women, and children, this was Jesus coming on the clouds in glory to take revenge on them for rejecting and crucifying him. They assert that Jerusalem is the entity Babylon the Great in Revelation (see Rev. 17:1–19:3), and with this assertion argue that Jerusalem was the wickedest and greatest corrupting influence in the world. They implicitly affirm that the Gentiles are less sinful and more acceptable to God than the Jews. All these are projections of gross human antisemitism onto God and Jesus. Consider these scriptures.

### **Jn 1:10-11**

<sup>1</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>2</sup> He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

John says that Jesus came to his own, and when he says that he is referring not only to the Jews but to the whole of humanity. “The world,” in John’s Gospel, refers to humanity at large in self-alienation from God. Scripture does not say the Jews are uniquely culpable for the rejection of Jesus. *Humanity* rejected Jesus.

### **Acts 4:24-27**

<sup>24</sup> And...they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, <sup>25</sup> who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? <sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’—<sup>27</sup> for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, <sup>28</sup> to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.”

Peter here sees the Jewish leaders and the Roman authorities as together representative of hostile humanity as a whole rejecting Jesus. The implication of this is that the Jews who rejected Jesus did not do so because they were Jews, but because they were human beings living (along with the rest of humanity) in self-alienation from

God. God foreknew that the encounter between himself and self-alienated humanity in the person of his Son Jesus would result in humanity expressing its murderous hostility towards Jesus, and he intentionally met and provided salvation for humanity at the place where Israel and Rome intersected. This problem of human rejection of God and Jesus, God's chosen Messiah, in the midst of the process of salvation itself, affects the Gentiles in very much the same way and to the same degree that it affected the ancient Hebrews and still affects the Jews. Salvation and reconciliation with God is freely offered to all, but few truly accept it. Even those who seem to accept it are often secretly hardened against it. "Many are called, but few are chosen," says Jesus (Mt. 22:14; cf. Mt. 7:13-14).

It is to be admitted that Paul's picture of the great majority of Jews as hardened against acceptance of Jesus as their Messiah according to God's predestined plan is unflattering to them as a people. But Paul also believes that they are destined, as a people, to turn to wholeheartedly to God through Christ at the end of this age (Rom. 11). Correspondingly, the picture of God's predestined plan for the Gentiles at the end of this current age is also deeply unflattering. Paul says in 2 Thessalonians that there will be a falling away, a rebellion, also known as "the apostasy," in which most Gentiles who claim to love Jesus will turn *en masse* to an utter counterfeit of him, the "man of lawlessness":

## 2 Thess. 2:3-4, 7-12

<sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you in any way. For [the Day of the Lord] will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, <sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. ... <sup>7</sup> For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. <sup>8</sup> And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. <sup>9</sup> The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, <sup>10</sup> and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. <sup>11</sup> Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, <sup>12</sup> in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

It is clear from this prophecy by Paul that the Gentiles are every bit as capable of thinking they love and serve God while in reality having no love for the truth and being deeply opposed to God in their hearts. Paul predicts that when given the chance at the end of this age, the great majority of self-confessed Christians will eagerly

accept the devil's magic tricks and believe in the man of lawlessness, also known as the antichrist. We Gentiles are no more virtuous in and of ourselves than the Jews, as Paul points out:

**Rom 11:22-23, 29**

<sup>22</sup> Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. <sup>23</sup> And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. ... <sup>29</sup> For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

## Appendix:

### A Listing of All Instances of *hē genea hautē*, “This Generation,” and Similar Expressions (e.g. *hē genea ekeinē*, “That Generation”) in the Bible

I have worked from the Hebrew word *dōr* (Strong’s H1755, searchable online at <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H1755&t=ESV>) and the Greek word *genea* (Strong’s G1074, searchable online at <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G1074&t=ESV>). In the listing below, items formatted in **Black** have a demonstrative pronoun: “this generation” and “that generation.” **Red** means neutral, normal sense of the word generation. **Blue** indicates that the word generation refers not to a literal generation but to a positive spiritual type—connoting, roughly, “the faithful.” **Green** indicates that there is reference to a “generation” that is faithless, but the demonstrative pronoun “this” or “that” is not used. Notice that in 41 of 45 biblical instances, the word “generation” in the singular carries the connotation of, and occurs in the context of, spiritual faithlessness, and that *every NT instance* apart from the questionable instance in the Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24; Mk 13; Lk. 21), and all but two OT instances, of the expressions “this generation” and “that generation” carry the same clear negative connotation of faithlessness:

1. Gen. 7:1 Then the LORD said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation.”
2. Exod. 1:6 Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation.
3. Num. 32:13 And the LORD’s anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the LORD was gone.
4. Deut. 1:35 Not one of these men of this evil generation shall see the good land that I swore to give to your fathers.
5. Deut. 2:14 And the time from our leaving Kadesh-barnea until we crossed the brook Zered was thirty-eight years, until the entire generation, that is, the men of war, had perished from the camp, as the LORD had sworn to them.

6. Deut. 32:5 They have dealt corruptly with him; they are no longer his children because they are blemished; they are a crooked and twisted generation.
7. Deut. 32:20 And he said, “I will hide my face from them; I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness.”
8. **Jdg. 2:10 And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers.**
9. Ps 12:7 (11:8 LXX) You, O LORD, will keep them; you will guard us from this generation forever.
10. Ps. 24:6 Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.
11. Ps. 73:15 If I had said, “I will speak thus,” I would have betrayed the generation of your children.
12. Ps. 78:8 and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.
13. Ps 95:10 (94:10 LXX) For forty years I loathed that generation and said, “They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they do not regard my ways.” Therefore in my anger I swore, “They shall not enter my rest.”
14. Prov. 30:11 There is a generation that curses their fathers and does not bless their mothers.
15. Prov. 30:12 There is a generation that is clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth.
16. Prov. 30:13 There is a generation—how lofty are their eyes, how high their eyelids lift!
17. Prov. 30:14 There is a generation whose teeth are swords, whose fangs are knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, the needy from among mankind.
18. Jer. 2:31 And you, O generation, behold the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness to Israel, or a land of thick darkness? Why then do my people say, ‘We are free, we will come no more to you’?
19. Jer. 7:29 Cut off your hair and cast it away; raise a lamentation on the bare heights, for the LORD has rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.

20. Jer. 8:3 Death shall be preferred to life by all the remnant that remains of this evil family (“that generation,” LXX) in all the places where I have driven them, declares the LORD of hosts.
21. Mt. 11:16 But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates...”
22. Mt. 12:39 But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.”
23. Mt. 12:41 The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.
24. Mt. 12:42 The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.
25. Mt. 12:45 Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation.
26. Mt. 16:4 An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” So he left them and departed.
27. Mt. 17:17 And Jesus answered, “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me.”
28. Mt. 23:36 Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.
29. Mt. 24:34 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.
30. Mk 8:12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.”
31. Mk 8:38 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

32. Mk 9:19 And he answered them, “O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.”
33. Mk 13:30 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.
34. Lk. 7:31 To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace...
35. Lk. 9:41 Jesus answered, “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.”
36. Lk. 11:29 When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, “This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.”
37. Lk. 11:30 For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.
38. Lk. 11:31 The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.
39. Lk. 11:32 The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.
40. Lk. 11:50-51 ...so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation.
41. Lk. 17:25 But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.
42. Lk. 21:32 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place.
43. Acts 2:40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked (Gr. *skolias*) generation.” This is an allusion to Deut. 32:5 which uses, in the LXX, the same words *skolios* and *genea*. Paul, in Phil. 2:15, also uses the same combination, making the same allusion.

44. Phil. 2:15-16 ...that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked (Gr. *skolias*) and twisted (Gr. *diestrammenē*) generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.
45. Heb. 3:10 Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.’

**Appendix 2:**  
**Examples of Generation (Heb. *dōr*) in the Hebrew Old Testament**  
**Denoting a Transhistorical Community of People**  
**Constituted by their Common Spiritual Condition**

Deut. 32:5 They have dealt corruptly with him; they are no longer his children because they are blemished; they are a crooked and twisted generation.

Deut. 32:20 And he said, 'I will hide my face from them; I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness.

Ps. 12:7 You, O LORD, will keep them; you will guard us from this generation forever.

Ps. 14:5 There they are in great terror, for God is with the generation of the righteous.

Ps. 24:6 Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Selah

Ps. 73:15 If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed the generation of your children.

Ps. 78:8 and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.

Ps. 95:10 For forty years I loathed that generation and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways."

Ps. 112:2 His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.

Prov. 30:11 There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers.

Prov. 30:12 There are those who are clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth.

Prov. 30:13 There are those—how lofty are their eyes, how high their eyelids lift!

Prov. 30:14 There are those whose teeth are swords, whose fangs are knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, the needy from among mankind.

Isa. 53:8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?

Jer. 2:31 And you, O generation, behold the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness to Israel, or a land of thick darkness? Why then do my people say, “We are free, we will come no more to you”?

Jer. 7:29 Cut off your hair and cast it away; raise a lamentation on the bare heights, for the LORD has rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.