

How Long is a Generation?

There has been much speculation about this. Some have thought it to be 40 years, since Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. However, this does not imply that a generation is 40 years. The people wandered 40 years because God did not want any of that older generation that came out of Egypt to enter the land. Thus, that generation was more than 40 years old since it is the adults who are being spoken about. Besides, nowhere in human history has a generation been 40 years.

When we examine Jesus words spoken to the First Century Jews the answer to this question seems clear.

“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.’ Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, 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. Luke 11:49-51 NIV

Jesus told that generation, His generation, that all the destruction spoken by the prophets would come upon them. That specific generation would suffer cruelly, as no other had, because of the blood of the prophets that had been shed by previous generations and also because they rejected Him. There can be no dispute about this meaning. It was all to come on that generation which He was part of. At that time Jesus was approximately 33 years old. The fulfillment of the word took place 40 years later, in 70 A.D. Therefore, I believe a generation, Biblically and prophetically speaking, is 70 years. The Bible is very specific about times, dates and numbers. Every number has a meaning. Had Jesus not died on the cross, He would have been 73 in the year 70 A.D. Therefore, His generation would have been in their sixties and seventies, perhaps even eighties. This does not make a generation approximate, but 70 years is the Biblical number and people live to different ages. This is substantiated by the following verse from Psalm 90:

“The length of our days is seventy years-- or eighty, if we have the strength.” Ps 90:10

The Number for Jerusalem

Seventy is the number related to Israel and Jerusalem. When the people went into exile in Babylon it was for 70 years. The angel told Daniel that 70 periods of 7 years had been decreed for the people and the city. The city was destroyed in 70 A.D., which was a Biblical generation after the birth of Messiah. Recently, I read that Jerusalem has had 69 battles

leaving one more to go which is the greatest battle of all. Let us examine this number in light of the events of the last century and the return of Jerusalem to the Jewish people.

Ezekiel states that Israel would be restored in two stages. First they would be restored back to the land, and then to the Messiah.

"For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. Ezek 36:24-28 NASU Emphasis Mine

The first stage, re-gathering from all the nations, was completed in 1967. Of course, this does not mean that all the Jews have come back. They will continue to come back until Messiah comes and at that time they will all be gathered again. It is the same as it was in the re-gathering from the Babylonian exile. At that time, when the remnant had come back to Jerusalem, then the nation had come back. The same is true today. When the Jewish state took possession of Jerusalem, the Jews had officially come back from the nations. That is the completion of the first stage. The second stage is their returning to God and to the Messiah, being sprinkled with water and filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, if this first stage ended officially in 1967, then it is reasonable to conclude that the second phase began then. This means that, since 1967, God is at work bringing the nation of Israel back to Himself and preparing them for Jesus' return.

Now if the official re-gathering ended in 1967, then we might well ask, "When did it begin?" If we know when the first stage officially began and officially ended, then it is reasonable to conclude that the second phase will be of similar length. But do we know when the official beginning of the re-gathering took place? I believe so. Few would argue that it started with the foundation of Zionism and the World Zionist Conference, which began in Switzerland in the year 1897. From 1897 to 1967 is exactly 70 years. Therefore, if the first phase took 70 years is it unreasonable to assume that the second phase would also take 70 years? The people born in the late 1890's saw the re-gathering of Israel, and the generation born in the late 1960's will not pass away until the restoration is complete.

Does this mean that I have just predicted the year Jesus will come back? Perhaps! Yet I didn't give the day or the hour. The end may come sooner, but it certainly won't take longer than 70 years from 1967, which brings us to 2037. Although you may not yet realize

it, we are in the second phase of the restoration spoken of by all the prophets and re-emphasized by Peter as the time of Messiah's return.