

AN EXERCISE ON “THIS GENERATION” IN MATTHEW, MARK AND LUKE

The following provides every appearance of the expression “this generation” by Jesus in the Gospels¹.

Matthew 11:16

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. He who has ears, let him hear.

“To what can I compare *this generation*? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.”

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ 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.”’ But wisdom is proved right by her actions.” (Matt. 11:12-19)

1. Did Jesus use the term “this generation” as a compliment?
2. Was Jesus speaking to people living at that time?
3. Was Jesus speaking about people living at that time?
4. Was Jesus making a *promise*, a *judgment* or a *warning* to “this generation”?

Matthew 12:41, 42

Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.”

He answered, “*a wicked and adulterous generation* asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given *it* except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 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.

“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 one greater than Jonah is here.

“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 one greater than Solomon is here.

“When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. 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 man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with *this wicked generation*.” (Matt. 12:38-45)

1. Did Jesus use the term “this generation” as a compliment?
2. Was Jesus speaking to people living at that time?
3. Was Jesus speaking about people living at that time?
4. Was Jesus making a *promise*, a *judgment* or a *warning* to “this generation”?

Matthew 23:36

“Woe to you, *teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!* You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!

¹ The New International Version (NIV) has been used.

“*You* snakes! *You* brood of vipers! How will *you* escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I am sending *you* prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them *you* will kill and crucify; others *you* will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town.

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. I tell *you* the truth, all this will come upon *this generation*.

“O *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you* who kill the prophets and stone those sent to *you*, how often I have longed to gather *your* children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but *you* were not willing. Look, *your* house is left to *you* desolate. (Matthew 23:29-38)

1. Did Jesus use the term “this generation” as a compliment?
2. Was Jesus speaking to people living at that time?
3. Was Jesus speaking about people living at that time?
4. Was Jesus making a *promise*, a *judgment* or a *warning* to “this generation”?

Matthew 24:34

“So when *you* see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak.

How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that *your* flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

At that time if anyone says to *you*, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time.

“So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the desert,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

“Immediately after the distress of those days, ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’

“At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, *this generation* will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” (Matt 24:15-35)

1. Did Jesus use the term “this generation” as a compliment?
2. Was Jesus speaking to people living at that time?
3. Was Jesus speaking about people living at that time?
4. Was Jesus making a *promise*, a *judgment* or a *warning* to “this generation”?

Mark 8:12

About four thousand men were present. And having sent them away, he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven.

He sighed deeply and said, “Why does *this generation* ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it.”

Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side. (Mark 8:9-13)

1. Did Jesus use the term “this generation” as a compliment?
2. Was Jesus speaking to people living at that time?
3. Was Jesus speaking about people living at that time?
4. Was Jesus making a *promise*, a *judgment* or a *warning* to “this generation”?

Mark 13:30

“When you see ‘the abomination that causes desolation’ standing where it does not belong—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down or enter the house to take anything out. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that this will not take place in winter, because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now—and never to be equaled again. If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them.

At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect—if that were possible. So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

“But *in those days, following that distress*, “ ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’

“*At that time* men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, *this generation* will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. (Mark 13:14-31)

1. Did Jesus use the term “this generation” as a compliment?
2. Was Jesus speaking to people living at that time?
3. Was Jesus speaking about people living at that time?
4. Was Jesus making a *promise*, a *judgment* or a *warning* to “this generation”?

Luke 7:31

After John’s messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: “What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces.

But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: “ ‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

(All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus’ words, acknowledged that God’s way was right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God’s purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)

“To what, then, can I compare *the people of this generation*? What are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other: “ ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry.’ For John the Baptist came neither eating

bread nor drinking wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ 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.” ’ (Luke 7:24-34)

1. Did Jesus use the term “this generation” as a compliment?
2. Was Jesus speaking to people living at that time?
3. Was Jesus speaking about people living at that time?
4. Was Jesus making a *promise*, a *judgment* or a *warning* to “this generation”?

Luke 11:30, 31, 32

As the crowds increased, Jesus said, “*This is a wicked generation*. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.

For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to *this generation*.

The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of *this generation* and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.

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 one greater than Jonah is *here*.” (Luke 11:29-32)

1. Did Jesus use the term “this generation” as a compliment?
2. Was Jesus speaking to people living at that time?
3. Was Jesus speaking about people living at that time?
4. Was Jesus making a *promise*, a *judgment* or a *warning* to “this generation”?

Luke 11:50, 51

“Woe to you *Pharisees*, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. “Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it.”

One of the experts in the law answered him, “Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also.”

Jesus replied, “And you *experts in the law*, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.

“Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your forefathers who killed them. So you testify that you approve of what your forefathers did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. 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.

“Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.”

When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, waiting to catch him in something he might say (Luke 11:43-54)

1. Did Jesus use the term “this generation” as a compliment?
2. Was Jesus speaking to people living at that time?
3. Was Jesus speaking about people living at that time?
4. Was Jesus making a *promise*, a *judgment* or a *warning* to “this generation”?

Luke 17:25

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.”

Then he said to his disciples, “The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. Men will tell you, ‘There he is!’ or ‘Here he is!’ Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other.

But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by *this generation*. (Luke 17:20-25)

1. Did Jesus use the term “this generation” as a compliment?
2. Was Jesus speaking to people living at that time?
3. Was Jesus speaking about people living at that time?
4. Was Jesus making a *promise*, a *judgment* or a *warning* to “this generation”?

Luke 21:32

“When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written.

How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

“I tell you the truth, *this generation* will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. (Luke 17:20-33)

1. Did Jesus use the term “this generation” as a compliment?
2. Was Jesus speaking to people living at that time?
3. Was Jesus speaking about people living at that time?
4. Was Jesus making a *promise*, a *judgment* or a *warning* to “this generation”?

And for a bonus final question

5. If Jesus was talking of a future generation, would he have said to the people in front of him “*this* generation”, or would he have said “*that* generation”?

Summary

Summarise your thoughts here: