

The Generation That Will Not Pass Away

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Responding to *The Watchtower*, May 15, 1984, concerning: "1914—The Generation That Will Not Pass Away." (pages 4-7).

For about 50 years the Watch Tower Society has preached that the generation of people who witnessed the events of 1914 would not pass away until the complete end of the world arrived. It has long been argued that the length of a generation was 70-80 years—the average life span of most people:

"And in Matthew 24:34, Mark 13:30 and Luke 21:32, the texts mentioning the generation the question refers to, we are not able to take generation as meaning the average time for one generation to be succeeded by the next, as Webster's does in its 33-year approximation; but rather more like Webster's first—quoted definition, 'the average lifetime of man.'" —*The Watchtower*, Sept. 1, 1952, page 542. "Even if we were to use seventy or eighty years as the length of a generation, this would not enable us to determine the time for Armageddon's commencement. Why? Because this war of God is not scheduled to occur exactly at the end of this generation. *It comes within the generation.*" —*Awake!* Sept. 22, 1962, page 28 (italics added).

"It is to be carefully noted that the youngest of those who *saw with understanding* the developing sign of the end of this system of things from its start in 1914 are now well over sixty years of age! In fact, the greater part of the adult generation that experienced the start of the 'last days' has already passed away in death." —*Awake!* Oct. 8, 1966, page 18. (italics added).

At the time the latter statement was made in 1966, a case was being made for 1975 as being a marked year when 6,000 years of human history would come to a close and a 1,000-year Sabbath of rest under the Kingdom of God would commence. The fact that the generation of 1914 was rapidly passing away was used to buttress the notion that by 1975 the end would be at hand. The same article went on to say in this regard:

"So we can expect *the immediate future* to be filled with thrilling events for those who rest their faith in God and his promises. It means that within relatively few years we will witness the fulfillment of the

remaining prophesies that have to do with the 'time of the end.'" —*Awake!*, Oct. 8, 1966, page 20. (italics added).

But now, eighteen years later [as of 1984], The Watch Tower Society is attempting to s-t-r-e-t-c-h out the generation of 1914. In the process they present a hodgepodge of data on what constitutes a "generation" that confuses more than it clarifies. They begin by quoting from a book, "The Generation of 1914", written by Robert Wohl, who presents a philosophical definition of what constitutes a "generation." This is followed by saying that Jesus used the word generation in various settings and ways and they then raise the following question:

"But what did he mean when he spoke of a 'generation what would not pass away'? Some have interpreted "generation" to mean a period of 30,40,70 or even 120 years. However, a generation is really related to people and events, rather than to a fixed number of years." *The Watchtower*, May 15, 1984, page 5.

After quoting from two reference works which offered definitions of how the Greek word rendered "generation" is used in the Bible The Watchtower says the following:

"These definitions embrace both those born around the time of a historic event and all those alive at that time. If Jesus used 'generation' in that sense and we apply it to 1914, then the babies of that generation are now 70 years old or older. And others alive in 1914 are in their 80's or 90's, a few even having reached a hundred. There are still many millions of that generation alive. Some of them 'will by no means pass away until all things occur.'" —Luke 21:32 (Ibid. page 5).

The *millions* to whom they refer were the infants and very young children alive in 1914. The *adult generation* of people in their 30's, 40's and older *have passed away!* Even those who were in their 20's in 1914 are virtually nonexistent! That the Watch Tower Society finds it necessary to continue fortifying the idea that the generation of 1914 is still with us is significant. It reveals their own uncertainty about the matter despite their rhetoric. They are continuing a 100-year-

plus history of loudly proclaiming wrong chronology of prophetic events.

In Luke chapter 21 Jesus is not giving a blueprint of events that were to occur thousands of years later so that a specific generation of people would know they were living in the "last days." He was speaking to the generation that was alive and listening to him speak. He was describing events that they were to be eye-witnesses of and he cautioned them not to get excited when they saw or heard these things because they were *not* the sign of his presence. His expressions about the cosmic disturbances that *would* mark his return as contained in verses 25-27 are parenthetical—inserted to show the contrast between the mere human and natural calamities (wars, famines, diseases, earthquakes, etc.) in *contrast* to the universal, cosmic manifestations of himself at the end of the age. The generation that heard Jesus speak did witness the non-signs of human and natural disturbances of which he spoke. They did not pass away until all these things took place. Many, if not most, would still be alive in 70 A.D. when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed. "Remember that all these things will take place before the people now living have all died." —Luke 21:32. —*Good News Bible*. That is obviously the meaning intended.

His coming at the end of the age was to be sudden, unannounced and unexpected according to Jesus' own statements. (Matthew 24:43,44; Mark 13:32-37; Acts 1:6-8). Everything that the Watch Tower Society teaches on the timing of the Lord's return is a contradiction of what the Lord actually said. □

UPDATE: The November 8, 1994 *Awake!* featured an article titled: "The Real Significance of 1914," wherein they continue to argue that the generation of

1914 will see the end of the world and then quote their own statement found on the title page of each issue of *Awake!*: "this magazine builds confidence in the *Creator's promise* of a peaceful and secure new world before the generation that saw the events of 1914 passes away." —page 10. (italics added). Note that it is '*the Creator's promise*,' not theirs!

For obvious reasons they no longer limit the "generation" to those who saw the events of 1914 "*with understanding*," as they previously did. Nor do they stress the point that it is "*within*" the generation of 1914 that the end comes. Now they make every attempt to stretch out the time of the generation and say: "This time of the end is, however, to be a relatively short period— *stretching* over one generation. (Luke 21:31,32) The fact that we are now 80 years beyond 1914 indicates that we can soon expect the deliverance that God Kingdom will bring." — Page 10. (italics added).

The November 8, 1995 *Awake!* presented yet another alteration in their mission statement. It now reads: "**Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things.**" Two important elements have been removed from the previous statement: 1) the date 1914 and 2) the word *generation*. While the publishers of *Awake!* are not likely to acknowledge it, the fact remains that the generation of 1914 has already passed away and they must now distance themselves from their earlier teaching.

It is not likely that the Society will ever completely abandon the 1914 date as it explains their reason for being, but they are now being forced to reinvent their interpretation of its prophetic significance.

Putting Faith in the "Slave" Organization

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