

The Terminal Generation

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*Prior to his death, Moses warned Israel that a **perverse and crooked generation** of Israelites would arise **in the last days**, whom God would destroy (Deut 31:28-30; 32:5, 15-20, 28-29). Most futurists today think we are living in those Last Days, and that we are that **terminal generation**.*

HOWEVER, THAT DELUSION IS easily debunked when we see Jesus and the New Testament writers claiming that *their generation* (AD 26-66) was indeed that prophesied “perverse and crooked generation” (Matt 12:39; 12:45; 16:4; Luke 11:29; Acts 2:40; Phil 2:15), which was about to be destroyed in those “last days” of the first century (Acts 2:16-17; James 5:3; Heb 1:2; 2 Tim 3:1; 2 Pet 3:3).

And because the New Testament saints understood that they were the *terminal generation*, they “kept on the alert at all times praying for strength to *escape* all these things [wrath, destruction] that were about to occur, and to *stand before* the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36).

Throughout the New Testament we see this same intensity of prayers, courage, vigilance, and diligence. Why were they so willing to sacrifice everything, including their lives, in order to take the gospel to every corner of the Roman world and Diaspora? What motivated them to do that? It was their **expectations** of *relief, rescue, and reward* at the Parousia.

Apostle Paul gave us a glimpse into his motivation when he told the Roman saints that “*the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is **about to be revealed** to us*” (Rom 8:18). Do you see why he was so willing to suffer all those things?

He had been caught up to the third heaven, where he saw and heard things that were *indescribable* (2 Cor 12:2-4). He knew that what awaited him at the end of his journey was “*far better*” (Phil 1:23; 1 Cor 2:9). He endured all of those temporary light afflictions in order to gain the eternal weight of glory (2 Cor 4:17). So, it was his *great expectations* which compelled him to “*press on to the goal to win the prize*” (Phil 3:14).

And those same *intense expectations* of relief, rescue, and reward were shared by the other first-century saints. They were likewise driven by their *great expectations* to “*run the race*” and “*finish the course*” (1 Cor 9:24; Heb 12:1; Acts 20:24; 2 Tim 4:7). They “**fixed their hope completely** on the grace to be brought to them at the revelation of Christ” (1 Pet 1:13). Sounds like they hoped to receive some incredible benefits at the Parousia! So, let’s take a closer look at their expectations and their hope.

What Were Their Expectations?

What did those first-century saints *expect to experience* at the Parousia? I read back through the whole New Testament looking for these statements. Here is what I found. As you read each of these verses in

context, ask yourself: “What were those first-century saints actually expecting to see, hear, and experience at the Parousia?”

- Some true Christians would **remain alive until the Parousia**—(Matt 16:28; 24:21-31, the “elect” would remain; Matt 24:34; 1 Cor 15:51; 1 Thess 4:15-17; 5:23; 2 Tim 1:18; Jude 21; Rev 2:25; cf. John 21:22f).
- Those living and remaining saints were **anxiously waiting, eagerly expecting, and longing for His return** (1 Cor 16:22; Phil 3:20; Heb 9:28; Jude 21; 1 Thess 1:10; Rom 8:19; 8:23, 25; 1 Cor 1:7; Rev 6:10), **groaning** within themselves (Rom 8:23), **longing to be clothed upon** with immortality, so that their mortality would be swallowed up and changed (2 Cor 5:2-4). They were **looking for** and **hastening the day** (2 Pet 3:12-14; Titus 2:13). They “*loved His appearing*” (2 Tim 4:8). They cried out, “*How long, Oh Lord?*” and “*Come Lord Jesus!*” (Rev 6:10; 22:20). They fasted while waiting for His return (Matt 9:15), and **fixed their hope completely upon it** (1 Pet 1:13). It was not something they would let pass by unnoticed. They did not miss it!
- They were expecting to **know** about His return, see Him **appear**, see Him **revealed**, **meet** with Him, **stand** in His presence, **glorify** Him on that day, and **marvel at Him** in the presence of all who had believed – (2 Thess 1:6-10; 1 Pet 1:7; 2:12; 4:13; 5:1; Jude 24; Matt 25:1,6,21,23; Eph 5:11-14; Phil 2:16; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; 4:17; 1 Thess 2:19; Col 3:4; 1 Cor 13:12; Rom 8:18, “about to be revealed”).
- **The Great Tribulation** (Neronic persecution) **would be cut short** by the outbreak of the Zealot rebellion so that some of the elect would remain alive until the Parousia (Matt 24:21-22, 29-31)
- **Relieved** of the persecution and tribulation (2 Thess 1:7)
- **See** the Son of Man coming (Matt 16:28; 24:30; 26:64; Luke 21:27; Rev 1:7)
- When they would see Him appear, they would stand up straight and lift up their heads because their **redemption** (bodily change and rapture) was drawing near (Luke 21:28)
- They would **not shrink away from Him** in shame when He appears (1 John 2:28)
- They would **hear a great trumpet** (Matt 24:31; 1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16)
- **The dead** saints would be **raised** out of Hades (1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:14-16; John 11:25; Luke 14:14; 2 Cor 4:14; 1 Cor 6:14)
- **Bodily change** of the living saints, which would put them into the unseen realm. (1 Cor 15:51-56; 2 Cor 5:2-4; Phil 3:21; 1 John 3:2; Rom 8:11; 8:23; Luke 21:28; Eph 1:14; 4:30; Luke 20:36)
- **Gathering of the elect by real angels**, not by human messengers (Matt 24:31; Matt 13:24-30, 36-43, 49; 24:22; Mark 13:27; 2 Thess 2:1)
- **Caught up** together and reunited with their departed loved ones to meet Christ *in the air* (unseen realm above) where they would remain forever afterwards (1 Thess 4:17)
- **Rescued** (escape) from the wrath outpouring (1 Thess 1:10; 5:9-10; Luke 21:36; Rom 5:9)

- **Saved, delivered, redeemed, and glorified** at His Coming—What was this additional kind of salvation and redemption for those saints who were *already forgiven of their sins*? It was the bodily change and catching up and glorification in heaven (1 Thess 5:9-10; 2 Tim 2:10-11; 2 Thess 1:10; Luke 21:28; Rom 8:17-23; 9:23; Eph 1:14; 4:30; Col 1:27; 3:4; 1 Pet 1:3-9; 5:1-6; Heb 9:28)
- **The twelve apostles would sit on twelve thrones** judging the twelve tribes in the unseen realm above (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30)
- Jesus would **receive them to Himself to be where He is** in heaven (John 14:3)
- Experience the **wedding feast** in heaven (Matt 25:6-10)
- **Presented to Christ** at His coming (2 Cor 4:14; Col 1:22; Eph 5:27)
- **Stand in His presence** at the Parousia (Luke 21:36; Jude 24; 2 Thess 1:10; Rev 22:4-5)
- **Marvel at Christ** in the presence of all believers who had been gathered (2 Thess 1:10; Col 3:4; cf. Rom 8:18; Matt 5:8; John 17:24; 1 Pet 1:7)
- **Joy in His presence** at His Coming (1 Thess 2:19; 1 Pet 4:13-14; Jude 24)
- **Rewarded** in the presence of Christ (Matt 16:27; Col 3:24; 2 Tim 4:8; 1 Pet 5:4; Rev 3:10-11; 11:18; 22:12)
- **Perfect** in *holiness, knowledge, and understanding* at the Parousia (1 Cor 13:8-12; 1 Thess 3:13; 5:23; Rev 22:4-5; cf. 1 Cor 1:8; 2:9; Eph 5:27; Phil 3:12; Col 1:22; Matt 18:10; 1 Pet 5:10; 1 John 3:2; Jude 24)
- **Gain immortality and eternal life** (Rom 2:7; 6:22-23; Titus 1:2; 1 John 2:25; Jude 21)
- **Live and reign with Christ** in heaven forever (Rev 22:4-5; 2 Tim 2:11-12; 1 Thess 4:17; Heb 9:16-20; Matt 8:11)
- **Saved before the wrath was poured out** on their enemies. They were not destined to go through the wrath. (2 Thess 1:6-9; Rev 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10; 16:19; 19:15; Luke 21:22-23; Matt 3:7; Rom 2:5; 9:22; Eph 5:6; Col 3:6; 1 Thess 2:16; Rev 6:10)
- **Rest of the dead would be raised** out of Hades and **judged** and sent to their respective eternal destinies. Hades was emptied. This occurred in the unseen realm. (Rev 20:13-15; Acts 24:15; Luke 20:35; John 5:25-29; Heb 6:2; Acts 17:31; 24:25; 2 Tim 4:1; Rev 11:18; 1 Pet 4:5; Rom 2:16; Matt 25:31-46; 1 Cor 4:5; 2 Tim 4:8)

Is it even remotely imaginable that every one of the pre-70 saints' expectations were fulfilled only in a non-experiential and non-cognitive (unperceived) way? Can their expectations be reduced to nothing more than unrealized wishful thinking? Or is it even possible that every single one of them totally misunderstood Jesus and the apostles? I fear that assessment not only grossly devalues their intelligence, but also calls into question the inspiration and teaching abilities of Jesus and the inspired apostles.

Those saints were NOT expecting the Parousia, Resurrection, and Judgment to come and go without their awareness of it and participation in it. They didn't miss it. The above list of expectations proves that they knew about it, saw it, and experienced it to the max.

They were promised “relief” from the persecution, “rescue” before the wrath was poured out, and “reward” in the presence of Jesus. And since those events did occur in the way they expected, it means that those saints were no longer on earth after the Parousia. That is why they didn't talk about it afterwards. *They were silent because they were absent! They were gone—taken to heaven just as they had expected!* †