

PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD

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What has come to be known as Last Generation Theology has become an incendiary topic in many circles of contemporary Adventism.

Punctuated with quotation marks, dismissive scorn, and the taint of implied extremism, this label is being fingered by various ones among us as representative of one of those belief systems which a balanced, informed Adventist needs to shun.

Now I know there are those who get nervous any time they hear a new religious or theological label that they're not familiar with. Many are immediately put on guard, because they fear this could be just another theological fad, or perhaps just another partisan slogan to divide the church into a new set of camps and controversies.

But in reality, folks, Last Generation Theology is as old as the Seventh-day Adventist Church itself, and is embedded in her spiritual DNA like few other theological constructs we could mention.

In simple words, what is meant by Last Generation Theology is as follows:

1. That at the opening of the great controversy, Satan declared that the law of God could not be obeyed—and that ever since, the ability of God's creatures to keep that law (whether in their fallen or unfallen state), has been the central issue of this conflict.
2. That Jesus came to this earth to demonstrate that even those with a fallen human nature—with its rebellious bent, urges, and desires—can still, through heaven's imparted strength, live a life of perfect obedience.
3. That the coming of Jesus has been delayed because God is waiting for an entire generation of faithful Christians to demonstrate how the obedience Christ rendered can be accomplished even in the worst of circumstances, and in the darkest hour, of time and eternity.

Now there are those who would have us believe that this theology is based primarily if not exclusively on a single Ellen White statement:

COL 69:

“Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.”

The assumption has been, or appears to have been, that if somehow the impact of this one statement could be neutralized, this particular theology would collapse.

Well, I hope no one will leave this meeting without a clear awareness that this teaching is based firmly on both the consensus of Holy Scripture and on the theological consensus of the writings of Ellen White, not just one or several statements.

Let's turn to the book of Revelation, shall we?

Rev. 7:1-3:

“And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the winds should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

“And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God, and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

“Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.”

Now how, according to the Bible, does this sealing process work?

II Cor. 1:21-22:

“Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, in God;

“Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

Eph. 1:13:

“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the Word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.”

Eph. 4:30:

“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

And what, according to this same author in this same context, does the work of the Holy Spirit accomplish in Christian lives?

Eph. 3:16-21:

“That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man;

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith: that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

“May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

“And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that ye ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.

“Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen.”

Notice how this passage tells us that the power of the Holy Spirit, whereby the next chapter says we are sealed, enables us to be “filled with all the fullness of God.”

No wonder Ellen White declares in EW 71:

“Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble, must reflect the image of Jesus fully.”

Notice also how this passage from Ephesians declares: “To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus.”

To Him be glory where? *In the church.*

Now what, according to the Bible, is God’s glory? *His character.*

Ex. 33:18-19:

“And he (Moses) said, I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.

“And He said, I will make all My goodness pass before thee.”

Ex. 34:6-7:

“And the Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth,

“Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.”

Now let us consider two of the most dramatic prophecies anywhere to be found in all of Scripture. Both of them are about God’s glory.

Num. 14:21:

“But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.”

Isa. 40:5:

“And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

Notice these guarantees—“as truly as I live,” and “the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

Elsewhere the same book describes the contrast which will at last be witnessed between God’s glory and the darkness of evil:

Isa. 60:1-2:

“Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

“For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.”

Now that we've seen how the Old Testament defines God's glory, let's look at what the New Testament says.

Rom. 3:23:

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

But according to the Bible—in both Testaments, as we have seen—this divine glory is going to be revealed through His church.

Isa 60:1:

"The glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

Eph. 3:21:

"Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus."

The book of Ephesians elaborates further just what this glory, revealed through the church, will look like:

Eph. 5:25-27:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.

"That He might sanctify and cleanse it through the washing of water by the Word.

"That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Let's listen to another such passage from Paul's writings:

Rom. 8:18-19:

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

So when we come again to the book of Revelation, and find the first angel's message, with its summons to "fear God and give glory to Him," we can safely conclude that this refers to a demonstration of godly character through God's people.

Elsewhere in Revelation we find this statement:

Rev. 10:7:

"But in the days of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished."

And what, according to the New Testament, is the "mystery of God":

Col. 1:26-29:

“Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints:

“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

“Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

“Whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily.”

Three points stand out in this passage:

1. The mystery of God, of which the apostle speaks, is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Verse 29 is clear that this is a reference to Christ working *in* the believer, not merely *among* believers as certain ones have alleged.

2. The task of presenting every man “perfect in Christ Jesus” does not refer to a mere declaration of righteousness while people continue to lapse into occasional sin. This is clear, once again, from verse 29, where Paul says he is *laboring* toward the goal of perfection in Christ, “striving”—in his words—“according to His working, which worketh in me mightily.”

This is also clearly something additional to Paul’s work for others.

3. After speaking of his goal of presenting everyone perfect in Christ Jesus, he says, “whereunto I also labor.”

In other words, the work he’s talking about in verse 28 is different from the work he’s talking about in verse 29.

In verse 28 he is talking about his work for others. In verse 29 he is talking about his personal striving for a perfect character.

This, brothers and sisters, is the mystery of God which the book of Revelation says will be finished in the days of the seventh angel, when he begins to sound with his trumpet. The character of Christ, worked out within the hearts and lives of His people, will at last be complete.

And then, as Rev. 11:15 assures us:

Rev. 11:15:

“The kingdoms of this world [will] become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.”

Now we’re going to look at some other Bible passages which speak of total sanctification as a prerequisite for the coming of Jesus.

First of all, let us confirm Whose example it is which makes this total sanctification possible:

I Peter 2:21-22:

“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in His steps.
“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.”

The apostle Paul writes of this experience on the part of those waiting for Jesus’ return in the following passage:

I Thess. 5:23:

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Returning to the apostle Peter:

II Peter 3:10-12,14:

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

“Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? . . .

“Wherefore, brethren, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”

Now there are those in contemporary Adventism who would have us believe that the word “hasting” in this verse does not mean to make Jesus’ coming happen soon. Rather, they tell us, it simply means to look eagerly for His coming.

Well, I’ve taken the time to look at eight (8) major modern translations of the Bible, and each of them render this verse in a manner identical to—and at times even stronger—than the King James Version.

NKJV, RSV, ESV, NASB:

“hastening the coming”

NIV:

“speed its coming”

NEB:

“work to hasten it on”

NLT:

“hurry it along”

TEV (Good News Bible):

“do your best to make it come soon”

And how is this hastening supposed to happen? Remember what the passage says:

II Peter 3:11-12:

“What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.”

So the fact that Jesus’ coming is to be hastened by the spiritual preparedness of His people is clearly set forth in this passage. It is on the basis of this Bible passage that Ellen White makes her renowned observation:

COL 69 (see also 8T 22-23):

“It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:12, margin).”

But this isn’t the only statement where Ellen White echoes the Biblical teaching that we’ve found not only in Second Peter, but also in Revelation chapter 10, regarding what God is waiting for in the preparation of His people for Christ’s second coming.

This is important to clarify, folks, because right now this idea that God is waiting for character preparation on the part of His people in order for Jesus to come, is under direct attack. Listen to these two statements from a very recent book:

“The last generation of believers has no power to determine the time of probation’s close by their performance. To finalize the big cosmic issues and close the drama of the great controversy is God’s prerogative alone”

God’s Character and the Last Generation (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Assn, 2018), p. 202.

“While we wait, we must not fall into another mistaken notion: thinking that the timing of the second coming is dependent on us reaching some standard of perfection.”

God’s Character and the Last Generation, p. 260.

Well, the question we are again forced to ask is, Will we believe the word of scholars, or the word of the Lord?

Listen to what Ellen White says about the delay of Jesus’ coming:

1SM 69:

“For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord’s professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.”

On the previous page, listen to what Ellen White says is needed on the part of God’s people in order to be ready for Jesus’ coming:

1SM 68:

“The people of God must purify their souls through obedience to the truth, and be prepared to stand without fault before Him at His coming.”

Here's another one:

Ev 696:

“We may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years, as did the children of Israel; but for Christ's sake, His people should not add sin to sin by charging God with the consequences of their own wrong course of action.”

Folks, when we claim God is the only One responsible for the timing of the second coming, rather than the unreadiness of His people, we are most assuredly blaming God for the lengthening of time and the delay of the advent.

Now consider this statement from the apostle John, regarding the preparation necessary to meet the Lord in peace at His coming:

I John 3:2-3:

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

“And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.”

Notice how we don't become pure as Jesus is pure when He appears. We do this while we still have the *hope* of His coming, *before* He appears.

In the messages to the seven churches in Revelation, all the promises are given to the overcomers (Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21).

But only the church of Laodicea, the church of the last days, is promised an overcoming experience identical to that of Jesus:

Rev. 3:21:

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.”

The faithful and victorious remnant of sacred history is first described in the Old Testament:

Zeph. 3:13:

“The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.”

And of course we find these words echoed in the book of Revelation, regarding the 144,000 who are translated without seeing death:

Rev. 14:5:

“And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

Now let us again look at Ellen White’s signature statement on perfection of character and the coming of Jesus:

COL 69:

“Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.”

I think we can clearly see, from what we have found in the Bible, that the case for Ellen White being a plagiarist has at last been conclusively made.

Like everything else she taught, she copied this teaching straight out of the Bible!

And the statement from *Christ’s Object Lessons* is just the beginning. Let’s look at a number of other statements which teach exactly the same thing:

GC 425:

“Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God’s people upon the earth. . . .

“When this work shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ will be ready for His appearing.”

GC 623:

“Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ. Not even by a thought could our Saviour be brought to yield to the power of temptation. . . . He had kept His Father’s commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to His advantage. This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.”

EW 71:

“I saw that none could share the ‘refreshing’ (latter rain) unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action.”

1T 187:

“Those who come up to every point and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will receive the latter rain, and thus be fitted for translation.”

TM 506-507:

“By the power of the Holy Spirit the moral image of God is to be perfected in the character. We are to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ . . . Every individual must realize his own necessity. The heart must be emptied of every defilement, and cleansed for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.”

RH Nov. 18, 1908:

“Only those who have withstood temptation in the strength of the Mighty One will be permitted to act a part in proclaiming it (the third angel’s message) when it shall have swelled into the loud cry.”

5T 214:

“Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us, as the early rain fell upon the disciples upon the day of Pentecost.”

5T 216:

“Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God—candidates for heaven.”

Ev 702:

“The latter rain will come, and the blessing of God will fill every soul that is purified from every defilement. It is our work today to yield our souls to Christ, that we may be fitted for the time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord—fitted for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.”

6BC 1055:

“May the Lord help His people to cleanse the soul temple from every defilement, and to maintain such a close connection with Him that they may be partakers of the latter rain when it shall be poured out.”

1T 619:

“The refreshing or power of God comes only on those who have prepared themselves for it by doing the work which God bids them, namely, cleansing themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

And that’s taken right out of the Bible, isn’t it?

II Cor. 7:1:

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

6BC 1118:

“Are we seeking for His fullness, ever pressing toward the mark set before us—the perfection of His character? When the Lord’s people reach this mark, they will be sealed in their foreheads. Filled with His Spirit, they will be complete in Christ, and the recording angel will declare, ‘It is finished.’”

TM 18-19:

“The church, being endowed with the righteousness of Christ, is His depository, in which the wealth of His mercy, His love, His grace, is to appear in full and final display. . . . The gift of His Holy Spirit, rich, full, and abundant, is to be to His church as an encompassing wall of fire, which the powers of hell shall not prevail against. In their untainted purity and spotless perfection, Christ looks upon His people as the reward of all His suffering, His humiliation, and His love, and the supplement of His glory.”

RH April 1, 1902:

“The Saviour is wounded afresh and put to open shame when His people pay no heed to His word. He came to this world and lived a sinless life, that in His power His people might also live lives of sinlessness. He desires them by practicing the principles of truth to show to the world that God’s grace has power to sanctify the heart.”

2T 355:

“When He comes, He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects in our characters, or to cure us of the infirmities of our tempers and dispositions. If wrought for us at all, this work will be accomplished before that time. When the Lord comes, those who are holy will be holy still. . . . The Refiner does not then sit to pursue His refining process and remove their sins and their corruption. This is all to be done in these hours of probation.”

Now let’s look a bit more closely at this issue of sinlessness. This is a word that is despised by many in contemporary Adventism, so far as God’s earthly requirement for His people is concerned. .

Look at this statement from a recent book:

“Biblical perfection is never defined as ‘sinlessness’ (‘sinlessness’ is not even a biblical term) but as ‘maturity’ and ‘integrity’ and ‘right directions, goals, and orientation in life.’
God’s Character and the Last Generation, p. 198.

First of all, this is demonstrably false in the Bible. Look at what the Bible says about Job:

Job 1:1 (see also verse 8):

“That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil.”

Eschewing evil sounds like sinlessness to me, folks. And despite the terrible loss and tragedy that followed, the Bible says of him:

Job 1:22 (see also 2:10):

“In all this Job sinned not, neither charged God foolishly.”

Speaking of Lucifer, the book of Ezekiel states:

Eze. 28:15:

“Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.”

And we saw this verse already:

II Cor. 7:1:

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Now we read a moment ago that “sinlessness is not even a biblical term.”

Well, guess what folks?

Neither is the word Trinity, nor such phrases as “virgin birth,” “bodily resurrection,” “investigative judgment,” or “annihilation of the wicked.”

But the concepts these words and phrases describe are very much a part of the Holy Word of God.

And so far as this idea that perfection merely refers to the “direction of the life,” as the statement we saw earlier claims,

What was the direction of Adam’s and Eve’s life when they sinned? That was just one sin!

But the Bible tells us what one sin can do, in James chapter 2, verse 10:

James 2:10:

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”

Most of us are familiar with Jesus’ statement in Matt. 5:48: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

It’s very popular in certain circles of contemporary Adventism to insist that this verse doesn’t carry the meaning of sinlessness.

Here is another statement from the book I’ve been quoting this afternoon:

“Perfectionists often cite this command (Matt. 5:48) as evidence that humans can and must be perfect in the sense of absolute sinlessness. But the biblical conception of ‘perfect’ (teleios) points in a rather different direction.”

God’s Character and the Last Generation, p. 273.

Well, we've seen from the Biblical evidence that this statement is wrong.

Now let's look at what Ellen White says about Matt. 5:48—and this is just the beginning:

DA 311:

“The tempter's agency is not to be accounted an excuse for one wrong act. Satan is jubilant when he hears the professed followers of Christ making excuses for their deformity of character. It is these excuses that lead to sin. There is no excuse for sinning. A holy temper, a Christlike life, is accessible to every repenting, believing child of God.”

Now let's look at some other statements from Ellen White's writings that explicitly talk about sinless obedience as both attainable and necessary in this life:

Ev 385:

“In our world, we are to remember the way in which Christ worked. He made the world. He made man. Then He came in person to the world to show its inhabitants how to live sinless lives.”

3T 83:

“Paul writes to the Corinthians, ‘Casting down imaginations, and every high think that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.’ When you come into this position, the work of consecration will be better understood by you both. Your thoughts will be pure, chaste, and elevated, your actions pure and sinless.”

RH Sept. 27, 1906:

“To everyone who surrenders fully to God is given the privilege of living without sin, in obedience to the law of heaven.”

YI April 16, 1903:

“But it is God's purpose that man shall stand before Him upright and noble; and God will not be defeated by Satan. He sent His Son to this world to bear the death penalty of man's transgression, and to show man how to live a sinless life. There is no other way in which man can be saved. ‘Without Me,’ Christ says, ‘ye can do nothing.’ Through Him, and Him alone, can the natural heart be changed, the affections transformed, the affections set flowing heavenward. Christ alone can give life to the soul dead in trespasses and sins.”

3SM 360:

“In the day of judgment the course of the man who has retained the frailty and imperfection of humanity will not be vindicated. For him there will be no place in heaven. He could not enjoy the perfection of the saints in light. He who has not sufficient faith in Christ to believe that He can keep him from sinning, has not the faith that will give him an entrance into the kingdom of God.”

It should be clear to all by now that both Scripture and the writings of Ellen White teach that through heaven's power here on earth, sinless obedience is both possible and necessary.

Now we're going to consider a key question which often arises when this issue is discussed.

Are God's requirements inconsistent? Does God require an achievement from the Last Generation that He hasn't required of previous generations?

Well first of all, the inspired pen is clear that God's requirement for salvation is the same throughout history:

SC 62:

"The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been—just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents—perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness."

However, the inspired pen is also clear that men and women are not accountable before God for sins of ignorance.

Acts 17:30:

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at."

James 4:17:

"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

According to the Bible, greater awareness of light and truth means greater accountability.

Prov. 4:18:

"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Jesus said:

Luke 12:48:

"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."

In the parable of the sower Jesus described the seed falling on good ground as follows:

Matt. 13:8:

"But other seed fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold."---all among the saved.

Ellen White agrees:

2T 692-693:

“We are accountable for the privileges that we enjoy, and for the light that shines upon our pathway. Those who lived in past generations were accountable for the light which was permitted to shine upon them. Their minds were exercised in regard to different points of Scripture which tested them. But they did not understand the truths which we do. They were not responsible for the light which they did not have. They had the Bible, as we have, but the time for the unfolding of special truth in relation to the closing scenes of this earth’s history, is during the last generations that shall live upon the earth.

“Special truths have been adapted to the conditions of the generations as they have existed. The present truth, which is a test to the people of this generation, was not a test to the people of generations far back. . . .

“We are accountable only for the light that shines upon us.”

EW 254:

“The minds of all who embrace this message are directed to the most holy place, where Jesus stands before the ark, making His final intercession for all those for whom mercy still lingers and for those who have ignorantly broken the law of God. This atonement is made for the righteous dead as well as for the righteous living. It includes all who died trusting in Christ, but who, not having received the light upon God’s commandments, had sinned ignorantly in transgressing its precepts.”

Notice how even sins of ignorance need to be handled by the heavenly Mediator. But after the close of probation, there will be no Mediator.

Remember what we read from Ellen White:

GC 425:

“Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator.”

Elsewhere she writes:

GC 614:

“In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor.”

And remember what we read about how all sin is to be removed from Christian lives “in these hours of probation.”

Speaking of Jesus’ second coming, Ellen White declares:

2T 355:

“The Refiner does not then sit to pursue His refining process and remove their sins and their corruption. This is all to be done in these hours of probation.”

So what this means is that all ignorant sin must be revealed to the Christian and overcome during probationary time, before the Mediator ceases His work.

All of us, when pressed, understand that different levels of light and truth are expected of different individuals and different generations, based on knowledge.

Martin Luther was a great man, greatly used by God in his day. But the truth of the matter is, folks, that the great founder of Protestantism would be quite unwelcome as a speaker on any contemporary Adventist platform that I know of, from the Association of Adventist Forums to a Hartland convocation.

Now the fact that Luther was a beer drinker and didn't keep the Sabbath might not bother our liberal friends. But the fact that he was a virulent anti-Semite would bother Adventists across the theological spectrum.

Listen to this statement about Martin Luther from William L. Shirer, in *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*:

“It is difficult to understand the behavior of most German Protestants in the first Nazi years unless one is aware of two things: their history and the influence of Martin Luther. The great founder of Protestantism was both a passionate anti-Semite and a ferocious believer in absolute obedience to political authority. He wanted Germany rid of the Jews and when they were sent away he advised that they be deprived of ‘all their cash and jewels and silver and gold’ and, furthermore, ‘that their synagogues or schools be set on fire, that their houses be broken up and destroyed . . . and that they be put under a roof or stable, like the gypsies . . . in misery and captivity as they incessantly lament and complain to God about us’—advice that was literally followed four centuries later by Hitler, Goering, and Himmler.”

William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960), p. 236.

So does God expect a higher character achievement—through His grace—from successive generations of believers, based on increased light and truth?

I believe the answer, from the inspired evidence, is clearly and definitively Yes.

Now let's consider the claim that Last Generation Theology is primarily the product of the teachings of three men: A.T. Jones, E.J. Waggoner, and M.L. Andreasen.

Now I don't wish in any way to denigrate the contribution and significance these men hold in the stream of Seventh-day Adventist history. But the fact is that Last Generation Theology cannot be fairly be credited or blamed—depending on your viewpoint—primarily on these three individuals.

The hard evidence of our history is that this theology has been thoroughly and deeply embedded in the spiritual DNA of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from the very beginning.

Such luminaries as Joseph Bates, Stephen Haskell, D.T. Bordeau, and W.W. Prescott presented key aspects of this theology in their public ministry. This has been documented by the

late Herbert Douglass in his book *Why Jesus Waits*. Herbert E. Douglass, *Why Jesus Waits*, pp. 47-49.

An even longer list of Adventist notables supporting Last Generation Theology is provided by Douglass in his later book *A Fork in the Road*:

C.P. Bollman, C. Lester Bond, F.G. Clifford, J.B. Conley, Gwynne Dalrymple, A.G. Daniels, Christian Edwardson, I.H. Evans, T.M. French, Fenton Edwin Froom, J.E. Fulton, E.F. Hackman, Carlyle B. Haynes, Benjamin Hoffman, W.E. Howell, Varner Johns, M.E. Kern, D. H. Kress, Frederick Lee, Meade MacGuire, J.L. McElhany, J.A. McMillan, Merlin Neff, Don F. Neufeld, A.V. Olson, W.E. Read, G.W. Reaser, H.L. Rudy, E.K. Slade, Uriah Smith, C.M. Snow, J.C. Stevens, Oscar Tait, G.B. Thompson, A.W. Truman, Allen Walker, F.M. Wilcox, L.A. Wilcox, M.C. Wilcox, William Wirth, L.H. Wood, and Dallas Young (see Douglass, *A Fork in the Road: Questions on Doctrine: The Historic Adventist Divide of 1957* (Coldwater, MI: Remnant Publications, 2008), p. 19).

And then, of course, we have such modern and contemporary Adventist figures as Kenneth H. Wood, Herbert E. Douglass, C. Mervyn Maxwell, Dennis E. Priebe, and Gerard Damsteegt.

Two very prominent modern Adventist authors, Ralph Larson and J.R. Zurcher, in their respective books *The Word Was Made Flesh* and *Touched With Our Feelings*, have documented the overwhelming support in over a century of Adventist literature for the post-Fall view of Christ's human nature, a key component of Last Generation Theology.

Elder Robert H. Pierson, president of the General Conference from 1966-1978, made this statement during the 1970s:

“God’s last-generation people are to reveal the character of Jesus to the world. They will overcome as He overcame. They will be victorious, living representatives of the Master. The enabling power to live this life, to achieve this character, comes from Jesus. Only through His imputed and imparted righteousness can we prevail.”

Robert H. Pierson, on the back cover of W.D. Frazee, *Ransom and Reunion Through the Sanctuary* (Wildwood, GA: Pioneers Memorial, 1994).

And only recently, our current General Conference president, Elder Ted Wilson, was asked at a meeting of the Adventist Theological Society, “What do you think of Last Generation Theology?”

Here, in part, in his answer, which you can read in its totality on Elder Wilson’s Facebook page:

“Leaning completely upon Christ and His righteousness, we need to believe that Christ will give us victory over sin through His power and not our own power (Phil 4:13; Romans 12:1,2). Otherwise, Christianity has no power. Philippians 2:5 tells us, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” . . .

“As we consecrate ourselves to Christ and allow Him to work in us to stay close to Him and His Word, we can then realize that beautiful quotation from *Christ’s Object Lessons*: ‘Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own’ (p. 69)”

<https://m.facebook.com/PastorTedWilson/photos/a.893482760707617.1073741827.221442104578356/924770757578817/?type=3&source=48>

In light of the evidence we have seen from Adventist history, it is little wonder that Anglican scholar Geoffrey Paxton, in his 1977 book *The Shaking of Adventism*, wrote after having surveyed over a century of Adventist literature:

“The doctrine of the perfecting of the final generation stands near the heart of Adventist theology.”

Geoffrey J. Paxton, *The Shaking of Adventism* (Wilmington, DE: Zenith Publishing Co, 1977), p. 114.

Two more recent historians, Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart—one a former Adventist, the other raised Adventist but who was never baptized—make similar observations in their book *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream* (published in 2007):

“If Christ had an unfair advantage, how could individuals be expected to follow his example in living a perfect life? The problem was particularly acute since perfection had been suggested by Ellen White as the goal of the Adventist people: ‘While our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ.’ (GC 623) Her call to perfection was urgent: ‘Jesus does not change the character at His coming. The work of transformation must be done now.’ (AH 16). . .

“Prior to [Edward] Heppenstall, no important Adventist writer denied the possibility of perfection. Ellen White had been unequivocal: ‘As the Son of Man was perfect in His life, so His followers are to be perfect in their life’ (DA 311).”

Malcolm Bull & Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), pp. 86-87.

So I hope, as we close this series, that the following is clear regarding Last Generation Theology:

1. It is strongly supported in Holy Scripture.
2. It is strongly supported in the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy.
3. It is strongly supported by the consensus of theological teaching throughout most of Seventh-day Adventist history.

Conclusion: Last Generation Theology and the Remnant Church Theology

In conclusion, brothers and sisters, I am going to take the position that properly understood, Last Generation Theology and the Remnant Church theology are one and the same thing.

Remember what we saw in the book of Zephaniah:

Zeph. 3:13:

“The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.”

The following two verses, as we all know, are the linchpin of Seventh-day Adventism’s Remnant Church theology:

Rev. 12:17:

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Rev. 14:12:

“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”

Notice it doesn’t say, Here are they who are doing their best to keep the commandments of God, but are still occasionally falling short.

It won’t make much sense, during the final crisis, to stand before a judge and claim that the Fourth Commandment we choose to honor in defiance of a global edict to the contrary, happens to come out of a law we presumably aren’t able to keep, even through God’s power.

Brothers and sisters, our task is clear.

God’s grace is sufficient.

Our divine mandate is before us.

Amos 4:12:

“Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.”