

Last Generation Theology Is It Biblical?

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“Last generation Theology” (LGT) or final generation theology is the belief that at the second coming of Christ there will be a group of people (Called the 144,000) that have received complete victory over every besetment of sin. This victory is not gained by receiving the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit (The Latter Rain), but by daily surrendering to God and resisting the Devil. This is “Historic Adventism”. It includes the following beliefs. Through His death on the cross Christ can reconcile and justify us by faith. It is our duty to prepare our characters for heaven by overcoming sin as Christ overcame sin. Sin is transgression of the Ten commandments and is a choice. Christ had a carnal nature. Christ is our Saviour and example who could have sinned but did not.

Since the book “Questions on Doctrine” was written a different view has sprung up within the church. Though not known by a specific name, we may know it by its specific doctrines. Christ has accomplished everything on the cross, and we are saved by grace and prepared for heaven upon receiving Christ as our Saviour. Sin is separation from God, and we are born carnal sinners, thus we cannot overcome sin but will be transformed into sinless beings when Jesus returns. Jesus did not have a carnal nature and is “The second Adam” (or he had a Pre-fall nature). Christ is our Saviour not our example because He could not sin.

A Closer Look at LGT

LGT is simply the belief that, when Christ comes back, there will be a generation of righteous people who are prepared to meet Him. This group is described in *Revelation 14:12*:

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

Additionally, *Revelation 10:7* makes reference to the subject:

“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when He shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets.”

The mystery of God is finished, just before the second coming. **What is this mystery?**

“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.**”—*Colossians 1:26-27*.

We see the Bible teaches that just before the second advent there will be a generation that has Christ fully formed in them. Christ dwelling in us and living out His perfect life is a mystery which the angels desire to look into. It is the greatest miracle God can perform.

“‘When the fruit is brought forth, immediately He putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come’ [Mark 4:29]. 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.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons, 69*.

“Christ’s love in the heart, revealing through the life its wondrous power—this is the greatest miracle that can be performed before a fallen, quarreling world. Let us try to work this miracle, not in our own power, but in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose we are and whom we serve. Let us put on Christ, and the miracle-working power of His grace will be so plainly revealed in the transformation of character that the world will be convinced that God has sent His Son into the world to make men as angels in character and life.”—*The Upward look, 233*.

LGT has far reaching implications on the Bible’s systematic theology. It affects the nature of Christ, sanctification, and our understanding of sin. *Let’s discuss all of these points. We will first focus on sin first. What is sin?*

“**‘Sin is the transgression of the law’ [1 John 3:4] This is the only definition of sin.** Without the law there can be no transgression. ‘By the law is the knowledge of sin’ [Romans 3:20]. The standard of righteousness is exceeding broad, prohibiting every evil thing.”—*7 Bible Commentary, 951*.

The Bible is plain about what sin is. It is also plain about the affects of sin:

“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.”—*Isaiah 59:2*.

Separation is the result of sin, not the cause of sin. Adam’s sin resulted in him hiding from God in the garden of Eden. Adam did not hide from God, before he sinned; the thought of hiding never occurred until after he disobeyed God. The story of the fall of man, in Genesis 3, also reveals another truth about sin. Adam was not forced to disobey, and neither was Eve. Eve chose to put forth her hand; she chose to take the fruit; she chose to eat it; she chose to share it with Adam. Adam chose to eat the fruit as well. Sin is not involuntary; it is a choice. After sin, Adam and Eve, with all their children, had

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a carnal nature.

“The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown.... God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them.”—*Desire of Ages*, 764.

“The lower passions have their seat in the body and work through it. The words, ‘flesh’ or ‘fleshly’ or ‘carnal lusts’ embrace the lower, corrupt nature; the flesh of itself cannot act contrary to the will of God. We are commanded to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts. How shall we do it? Shall we inflict pain on the body? No; but put to death the temptation to sin. The corrupt thought is to be expelled. Every thought is to be brought into captivity to Jesus Christ. All animal propensities are to be subjected to the higher powers of the soul. The love of God must reign supreme; Christ must occupy an undivided throne. Our bodies are to be regarded as His purchased possession. The members of the body are to become the instruments of righteousness.”—*The Adventist Home*, 127-128.

“The heart must be garrisoned [guarded] as was that of Joseph. Then temptations to depart from integrity will be met with decision: ‘How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?’ [Genesis 39:9]. The strongest temptation is no excuse for sin. No matter how severe the pressure brought to bear upon you, sin is your own act. The seat of the difficulty is the unrenewed heart.”—*The Adventist Home*, 331.

This is the root of the often fierce opposition to LGT: people seek an excuse to continue in sin because their hearts remain unrenewed.

To understand the nature of Christ We need to first understand the carnal nature. It is easiest to understand through an analogy in Proverbs 25:28:

“He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.”

Here the Bible parallels a man without self-control and a city without walls: Adam, before his fall, was like a city with walls; if Satan wanted to deceive him he had to knock on the gate and ask to come in. After Adam sinned Satan did not have to bring temptations from outward sources, but within man their sprung up all manner of temptations. Of themselves these desires cannot force us to act contrary to the will of God. It is our will that determines our actions. Jesus was tempted in his heart (carnal nature) but He delighted to do His Father's will. We delight to indulge in the pleasures of sin. The carnal nature refers to the temptations in our hearts. (It should be noted that sinning corrupts the will making us slaves to whatever sins we perform.)

When Christ begins His work in our hearts, one of the first things He does is to place within us a hatred of sin. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...” (Proverbs 9:10). “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate” (Proverbs 8:13). Without a hatred of sin we could never serve God. When we surrender to Him He changes our will and restores our walls of self control (willpower). This is of utmost importance to Christ, He says: “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me” (Isaiah 49:16).

The carnal nature is a result of sin. It is not sin itself; it is because Adam yielded himself to sin that we now have desires to do evil. The natural human heart does not challenge the lusts of the flesh; it is the Spirit of Christ in us that gives us desires contrary to the flesh. **Without the Spirit of God, we would have no desires contrary to our sinful ones.** When we are born again we receive the Spirit that has desires contrary to the carnal nature. Without this experience all religion is merely a legal form.

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6)

By nature the heart is evil, and “who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one” (Job 14:4). No human invention can find a remedy for the sinning soul. “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 8:7). “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matthew 15:19).

The fountain of the heart must be purified before the streams can become pure. He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. **There is no safety for one who has merely a legal religion, a form of godliness.** The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. **This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit.**—*Desire of Ages* 172.

Christ came in the flesh accepting the great law of heredity, but in one case He differed. Christ came with the sanctified nature of man, the fountain of His heart was already pure; for He was the sinless one. Note the following statements:

“It would have been an almost infinite [extremely great in degree] humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. **But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin.** Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations,

and to give us the example of a sinless life.”—*Desire of Ages*, 49.

“Our Saviour identified Himself with our needs and weakness, in that He became a suppliant, a petitioner, seeking from His Father fresh supplies of strength, that He might come forth braced for duty and trial. He is our example in all things. **He is a brother in our infirmities, ‘in all points tempted like as we are’ [Hebrews 4:15]; but, as the sinless one, His nature recoiled from evil.** He endured struggles and torture of soul in a world of sin.”—*Steps to Christ*, 93-94.

“Be careful, exceedingly careful as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ. Do not set Him before the people as a man with the propensities of sin. [Propensities: natural tendencies, to think and behave in a particular way] He is the second Adam. The first Adam was created a pure, sinless being, without a taint of sin upon him; he was in the image of God. He could fall, and he did fall through transgressing. Because of sin, his posterity was born with inherent [existing natural characteristics] propensities of disobedience. But Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. He took upon Himself human nature, and was tempted in all points as human nature is tempted. He could have sinned; He could have fallen, but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity. He was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden.”—*5 Bible Commentary*, 1128.

[Propensities are cultivated or inherited tendencies, they are separate from the carnal nature. They are gained by corruption of the will, a result of sinning. A simple illustration: a smoker who no longer smokes has the propensity to smoke again, especially during a stressful time. Proverbs 5:22 points to all sin as addictive]

A purified human nature is by no means free from temptation. Christ was tempted in his heart, just like us; yet He recoiled from the temptations in disgust. **This to Him was torture of soul**, total purity that was tempted by the lusts of the flesh. The Bible records of us: “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Hebrews 12:4). There is a love of sin in our hearts that Christ never shared. **Jesus never aligned His will with the flesh, and the flesh of itself cannot act contrary to the will of God.** Note what Ellen White says of the faculties of Christ:

“The Majesty of heaven undertook the cause of man, and with the same facilities (physical and mental abilities) that man may obtain, withstood the temptations of Satan as man must withstand them. This was the only way in which fallen man could become a partaker of the divine nature. In taking human nature, Christ was fitted to understand man’s trials and sorrows and all the temptations wherewith He is beset. Angels who were unacquainted with sin could not sympathize

with man in his peculiar trials. Christ condescended to take man’s nature, and was tempted in all points like as we, that He might know how to succor [aid; help; relief] all who should be tempted.”—*1 Selected Message*, 252.

Christ was born with the faculties we may obtain, not the faculties we have.

“Through the merits of Christ man may be able to exercise the noblest powers of his being, and expel sin from his soul.”—*Review and Herald April 25, 1893.*

“He came to impart His own divine nature, His own image, to the repentant, believing soul.”—*Youth’s Instructor, June 2, 1898.*

When we receive the Holy Spirit, we become partakers of the divine nature. This nature and our carnal nature battle within us, and the will determines which one will be obeyed.

“Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.”—*Steps to Christ 47.*

“All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that **when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service.** When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. **Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.**”—*Desire of Ages*, 668.

Through reliance upon Christ and personal effort, we can let this mind be in us. It is our Christian privilege to obey God’s will and be disgusted by our temptations rather than enticed.

Ellen White warns us against the deception of perfectionism. The perfectionism that she warned against is not “A legalistic belief we can overcome sin” it is the belief that sanctification purifies all our desires. This means we can “follow our hearts” and be saved, it has its roots in spiritualism. As long as we are in these bodies of flesh we will have temptations to overcome.

“Perfectionism.—Some of the early Adventists, shortly after the 1844 experience, lost their hold on God and drifted into fanaticism. Ellen White met these extremists with a ‘thus saith the Lord.’ She rebuked those who taught a state of perfection in

4 the flesh and therefore could not sin. Of such Mrs. White later wrote: **They held that those who are sanctified cannot sin. And this naturally led to the belief that the affections and desires of the sanctified ones were always right, and never in danger of leading them into sin.** In harmony with these sophistries, they were practicing the worst sins under the garb of sanctification, and through their deceptive, mesmeric influence were gaining a strange power over some of their associates, who did not see the evil of these apparently beautiful but seductive theories.' —*Early Writings 301.*

Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict, that we shall overcome. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. **So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience.**—*Acts of the Apostles 560.*

We shall have temptations as long as we are in this world, but instead of injuring us, they will only turn to our advantage, if resisted. The bounds are placed where Satan cannot pass. He may prepare the furnace, but instead of working injury, **it will only consume the dross, and bring forth the gold of the character, purer than before the trial.**—*Gospel workers 92 244*

Conclusion

Christ was born in the full potential of human sanctification, His tendencies were sanctified His will was aligned with His Fathers, but He had a carnal nature. When we abide in Him, He will sanctify our tendencies. Our lives can become so hidden in Christ that the will of God becomes our will; like Him we will hate sin and love the sinner. What a miracle!!

We may, through reliance upon Christ and willful obedience, become one with Christ as Christ is one with the Father (in John 17:20-22). Through communion with Him our hearts are filled with a hatred of sin and given the divine nature of love, the fulfillment of the royal law of liberty. In Christ every temptation is an opportunity, **He sanctifies us by bringing forth the gold of our character, purer than before the trial. We go from strength to strength and from glory to glory!**

There are many who oppose this theology; understandably, it makes them uncomfortable. If no changes are in the life, if no effort to overcome sin is made, upon hearing this, one would feel awfully condemned, even lost. The Bible says "Because

they have no changes, therefore they fear not God" (Psalm 55:19). Here the Bible points to the problem: no hatred of sin—a huge problem considering the First Angel's message opens with the statement "Fear God" (Revelation 14:7). How can this be overcome? "The seat of the difficulty is the unrenewed heart" (*Adventist Home, 331*). If this is your struggle, if no changes have been manifested in your life, please, my brother, my sister, ask Christ for a new heart. Ask Him for the Holy Spirit, claim the promise of Luke 11:13; then look to Jesus, read about Him, study His life, surrender to His love. The Bible says:

"I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries.... Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them."—Ezekiel 36:24-27.

Fall upon Christ, and let your heart be broken; then He will take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

Others have a problem with LGT because they have tried; they have made great efforts to overcome and failed. Because of this, they have fainted and given up. The thought of victory fills them with bitterness from memories of their own failures. *What is the cause of these failures?*

"Many have an idea that they must do some part of the work alone. They have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, but now **they seek by their own efforts to live aright. But every such effort must fail.** Jesus says, "Without Me ye can do nothing" [John 15:5]. Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness—all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly—by abiding in Him—that we are to grow in grace. He is not only the Author, but the Finisher of our faith. It is Christ first and last and always. He is to be with us, not only at the beginning and the end of our course, but at every step of the way. David says: "I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." Psalm 16:8."—*Steps to Christ, 69.*

We will only overcome as we realize our dependence upon our Saviour. Christ Himself said, "I can of Mine own self do nothing" (John 5:30). And He tells us "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). Christ depended upon His Father, and we must depend upon Christ. The more we depend upon Christ, the more we will find that His grace is sufficient for us and that His power is made perfect in our weakness. [*Please note LGT is so simple it can be explained in two verses Hebrews 4:15 and Revelations 3:21*] —**Jonathan Taylor**