

IT'S TIME SOMEONE FINALLY TOLD YOU THE TRUTH ABOUT...

The Last Generation

1) Introduction

- a) The term “the last generation” has in recent years been credited to M.L. Andreasen. Andreasen served as a pastor, evangelist, administrator, Seminary teacher, and author, among other things. One of his most well-known and widely-circulated books to this day is *The Sanctuary Service*, first published in 1937. The second to last chapter in that book – chapter 21 – is entitled “The Last Generation.” It is this chapter that is credited for much of what has gone wrong in Adventism.
- b) Dr. Leslie Hardinge, Adventist scholar known for his publications and teaching on the sanctuary, in his selected bibliography of his book *Shadows of His Sacrifice*, wrote of Andresen’s *The Sanctuary Service*,
 - i) “The best book published on this subject.”
- c) In an article by Dr. Angel Rodriguez in the *Adventist Review* entitled “Theology of the Last Generation,” he wrote
 - i) “The theology of the last generation was developed and popularized in the Adventist Church by M. L. Andreasen... This theology introduced a strong element of legalism in some sectors of the church by claiming that the character of God, maligned by Satan in the cosmic conflict, will be vindicated through the holy and perfect life of obedience of the last generation of believers. This generation will reach a level of character development unequalled in Christian history, copying perfectly in their lives what God did in Christ. Once this happens, the Lord will return. This theology seeks to explain why the Lord has not returned and the nature and purpose of Christian perfection. It is based primarily on a *particular reading* of the writings of Ellen G. White.” (Emphasis supplied).
- d) A pastor friend of mine has actually chosen to do his doctoral dissertation on Andreasen’s Last Generation Theology. A colleague asked “Are you serious? Why in the world would you do that?” likening it to committing professional suicide.

- e) Now I am not here to talk about Andresen's theology, but I am going to talk about the last generation. There are two things I want to start with, one I'm certain of, and the other reasonably sure of, as far as the last generation is concerned –
 - i) There will be one.
 - ii) Some of us will be a part of it.

2) Hiram Edson's Epiphany

- a) I have heard repeated arguments on "Arminianism" versus "Calvinism" that suggest that, because our Adventist pioneers came from an Arminianist understanding of Scripture, they adopted a more works-oriented theology. While this may sound plausible, even a cursory study of how our doctrines were formed will show that our pioneers, through diligent study of the Scriptures, had to lay aside their former belief systems, be they Arminianist, Calvinist, or whatever, in order to take their stand on the Bible. In other words, our foundational Adventist beliefs came from Scripture, not any man's theological framework. As such, we must seek to understand, not what Arminians or Calvinists taught regarding salvation and the last generation, but what our pioneers learned from Scripture.
- b) On the day after the disappointment in 1844, a farmer named Hiram Edson was on his way to strengthen his fellow believers after a morning prayer session when the Lord arrested his attention. He describes what he saw in these words –
 - i) "Heaven seemed open to my view, and I saw distinctly and clearly that instead of our High Priest coming out of the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary to this earth... at the end of the 2300 days, He, for the first time, entered on that day into the second apartment of that sanctuary, and that he had a work to perform in the most holy place before coming to the earth... And my mind was directed to the tenth chapter of Revelation, where I could see the vision had spoken and did not lie..." RH June 23, 1921.
- c) Time does not permit us to study out this "finishing of the mystery of God" at this time, but if you will give it some study, you will find that it is in reference to the work that Christ began in the Most Holy Place on October 22, 1844.
- d) For now, we will explore this divine redirection to the heavenly sanctuary.

4) The Heavenly Sanctuary

a) Edson had his attention redirected to the heavenly sanctuary. This was to be the new focal point of God's people.

i) We talk about "the sanctuary message." What is it?

There are many precious truths contained in the Word of God, but it is "present truth" that the flock needs now. I have seen the danger of the messengers running off from the important points of present truth, to dwell upon subjects that are not calculated to unite the flock and sanctify the soul. Satan will here take every possible advantage to injure the cause. But such subjects as the sanctuary, in connection with the 2300 days, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, are perfectly calculated to explain the past Advent movement and show what our present position is, establish the faith of the doubting, and give certainty to the glorious future. These, I have frequently seen, were the principal subjects on which the messengers should dwell. EW 63

ii) Notice that she did not say "Such subjects as the sanctuary...", but "the sanctuary *in connection with* the 2300 days..." **What does that connection do to the subject of the sanctuary?**

iii) She also adds the words from Revelation 14:12 – "the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus..." What does this have to do with the sanctuary in connection with the 2300 days?

iv) To answer the first question, the 2300 days directs us to the prophecy of Dan. 8:14 which directs us to the cleansing of the sanctuary, so let's start there.

b) The Day of Atonement

i) The "cleansing of the sanctuary" refers to the Day of Atonement. What happened on that day?

(1) Lev. 16:29-33. Please take careful note that there were *two* primary things cleansed, **not just one** –

(a) The people (v. 30), and

(b) The "holy sanctuary" (v. 33)

ii) Now what in the world is the significance of the cleansing of the *building* if the *people* have already been cleansed?

(1) **Please take note** – when the sins of the people were confessed over the head of the sacrificial animal, they were *transferred* to the animal; and when the animal was slain, and the blood collected, the blood was

now a carrier of the sins confessed. When the blood was *transferred* to the sanctuary, the sins were figuratively transferred to the sanctuary. Now the sanctuary needed to be cleansed, *not from blood*, but from *sin*.

iii) What this means in practical terms is that when we continue to have sin in our lives after forgiveness (which we inevitably will), the responsibility for that sin is borne by God, not us. The building represents the government of God; the law, the foundation of that government; our sin, the rebellion against that government. When we sin, it brings dishonor upon God. He continues to bear the reproach for our sin. Two examples should suffice.

(1) Rolling away the reproach of Egypt

(a) To commemorate the crossing of the Jordan after 40 years of wilderness wandering, God commanded Joshua to circumcise all the males who had been born in the wilderness in order to take away “the reproach of Egypt” (Josh. 5:1-9). The “reproach” or criticism of Egypt was that God was unable to bring His people into the land (Ex. 32:11-12).

(2) Dishonoring God’s name by our conduct

(a) Paul, speaking to the hypocrisy prevalent among the Jews, wrote “For ‘the name of God is *blasphemed* [reviled] among the Gentiles *because of you*,’ as it is written” (Rom. 2:24). In other words, the sin of God’s professed people brought a stain upon His character.

iv) Ellen White wrote –

If those who hide and excuse their faults could see how Satan exults over them, how he taunts Christ and holy angels with their course, they would make haste to confess their sins and to put them away. GC 489

Satan and his angels mark all the mean and covetous acts of these persons and present them to Jesus and His holy angels, saying reproachfully, "These are Christ's followers! They are preparing to be translated!" Satan compares their course with passages of Scripture in which it is plainly rebuked and then taunts the heavenly angels, saying, "These are following Christ and His Word! These are the fruit of Christ's sacrifice and redemption!" EW 268

c) So we see that our lives can bring dishonor upon God and His cause. However, the opposite is also true.

5) Vindicating the Character of God

- a) The story of Job
 - i) This story illustrates how God uses the faithful (in this case, Job) to refute Satan's accusations. When Satan tells of his going to and fro on the earth, God responds by saying "Have you considered My servant Job...?" He sets forth Job as an example of true, loving obedience in order to disprove the devil's insinuations that no one serves God out of love. The Bible bears the testimony "In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong" (Job 1:22).
 - ii) It's no coincidence that Ellen White, writing of the book of Job, said it "would be read with the deepest interest by the people of God until the close of time" (ST Feb. 19, 1880).
- b) The restoration of Israel
 - i) Ezekiel, writing of the restoration of Israel, said "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD," says the Lord GOD, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes" (Ezek. 36:22-23).
- c) The point is often argued that the cross forever vindicated God's character, and there is no need for further vindication, for that would take away from the efficacy of the cross.
 - i) Dr. Rodriguez, in his article "Theology of the Last Generation," wrote
 - (1) "In the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White the cosmic vindication of God is the exclusive result of the sacrificial death of Christ..."
 - ii) Then, ironically, he quotes from *Desire of Ages*, p. 762,
 - (1) "By His life and His death, Christ proved that God's justice did not destroy His mercy, but that sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan's charges were refuted. God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love,"
 - iii) then adds,
 - (1) "What Christ accomplished does not need to be supplemented; it is more than enough."

- iv) From a Biblical standpoint, this creates some major problems. Consider just a few –
- (1) Jesus promised to come back and hasn't. Why?
 - (2) Paul speaks of the gospel as a work that has only begun in us and will "continue it until it is finished when Jesus Christ comes again" (Phil. 1:6, ncv).
 - (3) Paul tells the Galatians that the work in them has only been started, not finished (Gal. 3:1)
 - (4) And he says that if Jesus hadn't raised from the dead, our faith is in vain (1 Cor. 15:17)
- v) Furthermore, if Dr. Rodriguez had just read four more paragraphs, he would have come to this statement –
- (1) "The warfare against God's law, which was begun in heaven, will be continued until the end of time. Every man will be tested. Obedience or disobedience is the question to be decided by the whole world. All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men. Here the dividing line will be drawn. There will be but two classes. Every character will be fully developed; and all will show whether they have chosen the side of loyalty or that of rebellion. Then the end will come. God will vindicate His law and deliver His people." – *Desire of Ages*, p. 763.
- vi) And several paragraphs before, referring to Calvary, she wrote –
- (1) Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer... The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken. Yet Satan was not then destroyed. The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy." – *Desire of Ages*, p. 761.

6) "Here They Are"

- a) Now let's review our first question – What does the connection with the 2300 days do to the sanctuary? It focuses us on the final intercessory work of Jesus as our High Priest in cleansing His people from sin, demonstrating the power of the gospel in their lives and thus bringing glory to God.
- b) Finally, I would like to answer our second question from earlier, What does Revelation 14:12 – "Here are they that keep the commandments of God

and the faith of Jesus” – have to do with “the sanctuary in connection with the 2300 days”? Well, I’ve practically just stated it. The three angels’ messages grow out of Daniel 8:14. This is why Daniel 8:14 is said to be “the foundation and central pillar of the Advent faith” (GC 409).

- c) In Revelation 14:12, the third angel concludes his message with the words “Here they are...” When does a person say “Here they are”? “Here are your jeans.” “Oh, here are the scissors.” “Here are the breath mints.” Or whatever. The implication is that someone was **looking** for them. Now consider the following –
 - i) The apostle Paul, pointing his readers to the future blessings of those presently struggling in the Christian life, wrote “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). Then he adds something very interesting – “For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God” (v. 19). The NCV puts it this way – “For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.”
 - ii) So according to the apostle, all creation is eagerly waiting – looking for – God’s glory to be revealed in His people.
 - iii) The Bible tells us that we are a theater to the onlooking universe (1 Cor. 4:9);
 - iv) that we, the church, will make known to the universe the “manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3:8-11).
- d) The universe is looking. All creation is eagerly waiting. The mystery is about to be finished. God is about to crush Satan under *our* feet (Rom. 16:20). I can hear the voice of God saying “Have you considered My servants... **Here they are...!**”

7) God Will Finish What He Started

- a) “I’ll never be good enough!”
 - i) This is true; none of us will ever be good enough. The Bible is plain, “There is none righteous, no, not one... There is none who does good, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10, 12). This is precisely why we need a Savior, and we need Him all the way through! Thank God it is not about us being good enough, but HIM being good enough! The work of salvation – of cleansing, of purification, of restoration, is HIS work, and HE will do it!
- b) God will finish what He started

- i) Christian recording artist Steven Curtis Chapman has devoted an entire album to how he understands what we have been calling “Last Generation Theology.” This man is not an Adventist; he hasn’t been sitting around reading Ellen White books. It is from His study of the Bible that he (along with many others) concludes that God will – must – finish His work in humanity as the crowning act of the Great Controversy. Here are some powerful lines from his song *God Will Finish What He Started* –

*You take two steps forward and three steps back
On a journey of a thousand miles
And you cry and you pray
But you know at this pace you never will arrive...
God will, He will finish what He started
No thread will be left unwoven
Nothing will be left undone
Every plan and every purpose
That He has will be accomplished
And God will finish what He’s begun.*

- c) There’s an old Christian favorite called “He’s Able.” We love it. We sing it. Do we believe it? Friends, He IS able! He’s come to save us – save us completely – and He will. What are we to do? “Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 Jn. 3:3).

We are to copy no human being. There is no human being wise enough to be our criterion. We are to look to the man Christ Jesus, who is complete in the perfection of righteousness and holiness. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He is the pattern Man. His experience is the measure of the experience that we are to gain. His character is our model. Let us, then, take our minds off the perplexities and the difficulties of this life, and fix them on him, that by beholding we may be changed into his likeness. We may behold Christ to good purpose. We may safely look to him; for he is all-wise. As we look to him and think of him, he will be formed within, the hope of glory. Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand. And let us do all that we can to help others to gain heaven. We are to have an intense interest in Christ Jesus; for he is our Saviour. He came to this world to be tempted in all points as we are, to prove to the universe that in this world of sin human beings can live lives that God will approve. RH March 9, 1905