

Last Generation Theology

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People often reach out to Come and Reason Ministries with questions about topics they have concerns about, and one of the topics that I get asked about frequently is Last Generation Theology (LGT)—what I think of it and what is the design-law view of it.

LGT is the belief that a group of people, often referred to as “the remnant,” will obtain “moral perfection” and “stop sinning” prior to the second coming of Jesus.

The idea of perfection is not a human idea; the teaching about being perfect comes from Jesus:

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48 NIV84).

Such a statement is often heard with trepidation. How can we sinners ever be perfect like God is perfect?

The most critical question to ask yourself is, “What law lens am I understanding this passage through?” Do you understand “be perfect” through the lens of human law, which is imposed rules that monitor and govern behavior—or do you understand it through God’s design laws, the protocols upon which life and health are built to operate?

If you understand Bible perfection through the imposed-law lens, then being perfect is about performance, deeds, acts, tasks, and works. Ultimately, people teach that one must stop “sinning”—that is, every single act or deed one does must be perfect. Those who hold to this imposed-law understanding prefer the King James rendering of 1 John 3:4: “Sin is transgression of the law,” in which they conclude that “law” refers to imposed rules and “transgression” means bad behavior or rule-breaking. Their idea of biblical perfection is perfect rule-keeping.

But this concept induces fear and discouragement because this teaching is often coupled with another misunderstood concept: that prior to the second coming, 1) Jesus stops His intercession for sinners as our Mediator in heaven and, thus, 2) any sins committed afterward cannot be forgiven or erased out of the books and, thus, 3) these sins remain on the sinner’s account and, thus, 4) God will be required to punish the sinner in hellfire. This is why, according to LGT proponents, the last generation must be perfect because for any sin committed after Jesus leaves His mediatorial role, the sinner will be held legally accountable.

LGT taught through human imposed law causes a lot of distress for many Christians because they know their own many weaknesses, shortcomings, and mistakes, and they just don’t believe that they can ever be perfect—and according to LGT, only the perfect will be translated to heaven when Jesus comes. So rather than increasing trust in Jesus, this theology has incited fear in many and caused many to give up on God.

When we return to worshiping God as Creator, we realize that His laws are [design laws](#), the protocols the Creator built reality to operate upon; we understand that 1 John 3:4 is better rendered as “sin is lawlessness” (NKJV, NIV, NRSV, ESV; see also NET, NCV, MES, REM, NLT) or being out of harmony with God’s law, which is not a set of imposed rules but the design protocols for life.

We understand that the basis for life in God’s universe is God and the law upon which He constructed life to operate. We realize that we sinners must be restored to unity with God in heart, mind, soul, and strength. And we read Jesus’ words about being perfect in their full context, allowing Jesus to inform us of what He meant:

You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? **Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect** (Matthew 5:43–48 NIV84).

Jesus Himself describes what being perfect means: to love everyone, consistently and reliably, just like the sun and the rain treat everyone exactly the same. But it is understood that this is only possible by first being restored to a love and trust relationship with God, as Jesus said multiple times:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Matthew

22:37-40 NIV84).

And how does God's love get restored into our hearts so that we can be perfect? It is by trust—that is, faith—in God. Thus, as the apostle Paul wrote:

Everything that does not come from faith is sin (Romans 14:23).

Bible perfection is not about deeds or tasks; it is about love and trust, about maturity of character. Speaking of Jesus, Hebrews states:

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, **once made perfect**, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (Hebrews 5:7-9 NIV84)

But wasn't Jesus always perfect? Jesus was certainly always sinless, but Bible perfection isn't about sinlessness. Adam and Eve in Eden were sinless, but they were not perfected. Bible perfection is about maturity of character, which is about coming into a love and trust relationship with God so deeply that nothing can shake us from it. The "perfect" are those who remain faithful, loyal, and true to God in their heart's devotion no matter what. They might have questions, they might misunderstand, they might be confused about why things are going the way they are; they might cry out like Jesus did, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:45 NIV84), but also just like Jesus, they still trust God and won't break trust with Him.

There are examples of people who achieved such perfection—they were not sinless beings, but they were sinners who had come to love and trust God so fully that nothing could shake them from their faithfulness to Him—thus, they were described by God as being "perfect."

The LORD said unto Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" (Job 1:8 KJV).

Other examples include:

- Daniel: He would rather be thrown into the lion's den than betray God.
- Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego: They would rather be thrown into a fiery furnace than betray God.

These "perfect" people were not sinless; they were settled into such faithful loyalty to God that nothing could shake them from it. They would not compromise love for God and others in order to advantage or protect themselves.

This is the perfection that Jesus was directing the rich young ruler to obtain:

Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Matthew 19:21 NIV84).

Through what law lens do you understand Jesus’ words? If you read them through the imposed-law lens, then Jesus just made a rule, a behavior, a task that those who want to be “perfect” must perform: They must not possess any significant wealth; they must sell all their earthly goods and give the proceeds to the poor.

But if one understands Jesus’ words through design law, then one understands perfection is actually about maturity of character—in whom one places their trust. The Jews in Christ’s day believed that health and wealth were evidence of God’s favor, while sickness and poverty were evidence of God’s curse, of being out of God’s favor and abandoned by God in sin. The book of Job should have prevented them from drawing such a flawed conclusion, but it didn’t; this is how they thought and taught.

The rich young ruler was of this flawed mindset and, thus, his faith was not in God but in the wealth that made him feel safe, secure, and righteous. Jesus told him if he wanted real perfection—perfection of heart, mind, and soul—then he must stop trusting in wealth and, instead, trust in Him; he must get rid of all his earthly securities and put his complete trust in Jesus. But the young man couldn’t do it, revealing the problem was not in his wealth but where he placed his trust.

The last generation before Christ appears will face a similar dilemma. They will be oppressed by beastly powers that will use imposed laws and coercive force to take away the freedoms of those who are not marked as loyal to the beastly system—including removing their economic freedom by taking their property and wealth. Those who have been perfected in their loyalty to Jesus will not compromise their faith in Him in order to hold on to their assets, whether those assets are personal wealth or institutional wealth. They will not compromise the principles of God’s kingdom to hold on to their church properties, hospitals, schools, clinics, or publishing houses. They will stay faithful to Jesus even if, like Daniel, they end up captives of a godless power and are thrown into a lion’s den.

This is exactly how the Bible describes the righteous people who are ready for translation, the true last generation:

They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (Revelation 12:11 NIV84).

The perfect, those who are ready to meet Jesus when He returns in the clouds, are not those with perfect deeds or tasks, but those whose hearts have been restored to *perfect* trust in God. They are settled in their relationship with God so deeply that nothing can shake them from it. No trial, no tribulation, no temptation, no lie, no pain, no loss, no attack will cause them to break faith with God. They are sealed to God in heart, in mind, in soul—and they trust God with their future.

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48 NIV84).