

Transcript of Lesson 15

Welcome again to our study on **The Doctrine of Salvation**
How “Righteousness by Faith” Really Works

We are in **Section D: What is Biblical Perfection?**

And this is Lesson 15: **The Final Generation**

Bible prophecies that have already been fulfilled and the evidence in the world around us tells us that we are living in the time described in the Bible as “The Last Days” of the time of the end. Our world is rapidly moving toward the final climax, and God will soon orchestrate the very final events.

If we are alive when these final events happen, then it is important to know what the characteristics of the final generation will be, and most importantly, how we can be on God's side when the world, as we know it, comes to its tragic end.

What happens before Jesus comes? Jesus says in **Revelation 22:11-12**: “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

Each person’s character will be fixed permanently some time before the second coming. This text tells us that at a certain point in time those who are wicked will stay that way, and those who are righteous will stay that way. A short time after this point, Jesus will come “quickly.”

We call this point the Close of Probation, because it ends the time during which human beings can change loyalties between God and Satan.

At that point, our time of probation – the time we have been granted for making our eternal choices, will have ended. We are not told how long it will be from the Close of Probation to the Second Coming, except for the word “quickly.” It will not be a long period of time, but it will be an important time period.

What happens during this time? **Daniel 12:1** tells us: “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” When Michael stands up, a time of trouble follows.

Chapter 11 of Daniel describes events in the future from the days of Daniel to the very end of earth's history. After these world events play out, then Michael (another name for Christ) stands up to begin a new phase of God's plan for the fallen human race, which is also for all the heavenly hosts throughout the Universe to witness.

When Christ stands up at the Close of Probation a terrible time of trouble for the human race will begin. Again, we are not told how long this time of trouble will be, but since God's people will be delivered “at that time,” it cannot be a lengthy period of time.

What else happens during this time? **Revelation 15:8** tells us; “And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.” The Seven Last Plagues fall on all the wicked throughout the earth.

The time of trouble described by Daniel will be like no other time in earth's history, because this earth has never experienced disasters like the plagues described in Revelation 16. Only by God's protecting hand will His people be able to survive what is coming on this earth.

What else does Michael do at the close of probation? **Revelation 8:3-5** explains: “And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.”

Incense and prayers will come to an end at this point. These verses describe the work of angels in bringing our prayers for forgiveness to the attention of God. Here we learn that at this point, no more prayers for forgiveness with the incense of the merits of Christ will be offered upon the golden altar. Christ stops His mediatorial work in the Most Holy Place. This occurs at the Close of Probation and continues through the time of the Seven Last Plagues.

Shortly before Jesus returns, there will be a time when no more prayers for forgiveness will be accepted by God, and there will be no more changing of loyalties from one side to the other. Everyone will have made their decision, and their decisions will be final. Surely this is the most serious time that has ever been known in all of earth's history.

Where are we now in the stream of time? **Revelation 7:1** tells us: “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 wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.”

The angels are holding back the forces of destruction. We are in the period just before the final time of trouble breaks upon the earth. God's angels have been commissioned to hold back the winds of destruction for a specific purpose.

Why are the angels holding back the winds? **Revelation 7:2-4** explains: “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. And I heard the number of them which were sealed, and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.”

The earth will not be hurt until God's people are sealed. This may be the most important text of all our lessons. God says that He will not allow the winds of destruction to come upon the earth until He has sealed His people. This means that we now have the answer as to what is holding up the final events of this earth's history.

God is not waiting for more evil to be perpetuated. He is not waiting for a temple to be rebuilt in Israel. He is not waiting for certain pronouncements by the Pope in Rome. God is waiting for a special people, a people whom He can seal (claim) as His very own. When God has found and sealed this final generation, then the climactic end of this world's history will rapidly follow.

How does God describe this group? **Revelation 14:1** tells us: “And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.” God wants His name written in His people's foreheads.

Now we know what the seal of God is. It is His name, meaning His character, written permanently in the minds of His people. They belong totally to Him, and their decision is final. They have the mind of Christ and decided to be righteous and holy forever. They have all decided to stop rebelling. All sin, of every kind, is gone forever from their lives – before Christ comes.

What is their spiritual experience? **Revelation 14:5** says: “And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.” They are faultless before God.

This is an incredible, almost impossible, description of a group of human beings – who were previously sinners just like all of us. If we might have any doubt about what “without fault” means, **1 Peter 1:19** and **Hebrews 9:14** use this same phrase to refer to Jesus Christ. There is simply no sin in their lives.

They are actually living sinless lives in sinful natures – something that Satan said could never be done. This will not happen because God pushes some magic button in their brains, or because He takes away their fallen natures to make it easier for them to obey, but because they have allowed the Spirit of Christ to control their lives so completely that they can live the same sinless life that Christ lived while He was on earth.

If the Bible really teaches that there is a Close of Probation, and that God is demonstrating something special after the Close of Probation, then it seems we must also believe in **full character perfection and maturity in Jesus Christ**, which means living without yielding to our sinful desires.

If the priestly ministry of forgiveness comes to an end at the Close of Probation, that means that there will be no more forgiveness of sins after that time. If the ministry of forgiving sins will have ceased, then it seems imperative that there be no sinning on the part of those who are sealed to God.

If we take seriously the biblical admonitions to overcome sin, the reality of the Close of Probation, and the challenge of the 144,000, then we must also take seriously the truth of living without sinning.

This can be an overwhelming thought, with lots of room for pessimism and discouragement. Right here, we need to review the previous lessons we studied:

First, we are dependent on God's promise and power, not our own abilities. If He can create the world in six days and raise Lazarus from the dead, then He can perform miracles in us, as well.

Second, because forgiveness ends when probation closes, it does not imply the end of the enabling power of Christ dwelling within His people on earth. In fact, we will need Christ in us more and closer than ever before. Christ abiding within – constantly within – will be our assurance of success.

And third, living without sin is the goal – the end result. Our focus must remain on justification and sanctification, because this is the method to achieve our goal of sinlessness.

Jesus forgives us of our sins, and He comes into our lives with power and victory over sin. As we focus on justification and sanctification the goal will naturally follow. It will be the natural result of letting God do His full work in our hearts.

As an athlete running in a footrace focuses on the next few yards while remembering the finish line at the end of the race, so it is for the Christian who focuses on his relationship with Christ today while remembering that God's character will be vindicated at the end of this great controversy.

If God is really waiting for a special group of people before He initiates the final events of earth's history, shouldn't we be spending all of our time and energy learning how to be a part of that special group? This needs to be our number one priority, with all the other issues a distant second in our lives.

Let us strive with all our hearts to be part of God's 144,000.

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