

# Preparing Youth for Living in the End Times

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Covenant youth are fascinated with eschatology. Little prodding to “listen up” or “pay attention” is necessary when the family meditates upon texts such as Matthew 24, II Peter 3, and Daniel 7-12 during devotions. When the end times are discussed at societies, young peoples outings, or as general conversation, even lips often tightly shut mysteriously open in order to contribute. This fascination by believing children is an expression of Christian hope. This is the blessed hope of the believing child springing to conscious life by the Spirit of Christ as an eager anticipation for the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the body. However, this hope is not innately mature, but is mingled with fear, unbelief, trepidation, and error. This blessed hope must be cultivated and grown through solid instruction in the truths of Scripture. Only then will the covenant seed find comfort in the doctrines of the end times. Only then are they prepared for life.

Preparation for living in the end times is an aspect of godly covenantal education. Full-orbed covenantal education includes instruction in the end times in order to properly prepare youth for this life and the next. Covenantal education that teaches the youth their proper relationship in this life and world as the covenant friends of God through Jesus Christ, necessarily must teach the end times as the goal of that covenant relationship. The end of this present world and the triumphant return of Christ to gather his elect converge as the very goal of all history, as the reason why this world was created in the first place. This instruction in the end times represents then, a most fundamental component of covenantal education. If the youth are not instructed properly concerning the end times as the fulfillment and goal of their covenant relationship to God, they are not prepared to live in this life at all. In fact, they will not be able to live, but will die with the rest of world.

Preparation is the process of getting ready for some future event in order to either prevent negative or achieve positive results. It is the God-given means to preserve life. It is wisdom. Even the ant wisely prepares for the approaching winter by diligently gathering its food in the summer (Prov. 30:25). Preparation usually involves the revelation of a future event, assessment of its probability of occurrence, identification of negative or positive results depending on the level of preparation, possible courses of action, and a decision on the best mode of preparation to achieve the desired result. For example, Mr. Van De Leren reveals a test will be given next Monday. The probability it will not occur is dependent on factors such as his health, etc. The man is never sick. You can figure on a test. Based on your past history, if you do not study you will get a D and Dad will react negatively. However, if you prepare by studying your notes and memorizing, you can expect a B (Mr. Van De Leren does not grade on a curve) and beaming parents. You decide to study, a wise choice.

Youth are prepared for living in the end times only when they are instructed in the wisdom of Scripture. Christ himself tells us that the future reality that we must prepare for is his imminent return and the resurrection of our bodies to everlasting life. This is our hope. Scripture alone provides the content and information that young people must be taught in order to be prepared for living in the end times. Only Scripture reveals the future events of Christ's

triumphant return, the correct interpretation of the signs of his coming, and the resultant comfort for the child of God. All unbiblical speculation and human fantasies do not prepare youth with wisdom, but lead them astray into all sorts of foolish hopes and dreams.

The majority of the Christian church world, rejecting fundamental teachings of Scripture, dreams and fantasizes concerning the end times. Chief are pre- and post-millennialism. Just as we may not ignore the ungodly world's dictum of "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die," so also preparation of the youth must include instruction in these major errors that present equally foolish presentations of future reality. It is not only the pagan who rejects Christ's words in Scripture. But, according to II Peter 3, scoffers within the church, willingly ignorant of God's past judgments, jeer at the imminent return of Christ: "Where is the promise of his coming?" False prophets among the people use the lusts of the flesh to alluringly present a different hope than the bodily return of Christ to dwell with his elect in a new heavens and earth.

Post-millennialism dangerously presents such false hope within Reformed and Presbyterian churches. As with all doctrinal errors, it has developed. Over the past 30 years post-millennialism has taken the pernicious form of Christian Reconstructionism and has been accepted within conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches as an alternative eschatological viewpoint. It is an assault upon the only comfort and hope of the church.

Christian Reconstruction teaches that all the prophecy of the Old and New Testaments regarding the signs of Christ's return, including apostasy, tribulation, and the Antichrist, have already been fulfilled in 70 A.D with the destruction of Jerusalem. Belief by the New Testament church (including the apostles) in the imminent return of Christ is a terrible mistake that has prevented the church from "Christianizing" the world. This "Christianizing" involves bringing the whole world under the political and religious dominion of Christianity, which will rule the world for a "golden" thousand years by re-establishing Old Testament Jewish law. Only then will Christ return (if, as some maintain, he even comes at all.) The victory of the church is an earthly victory. The believer is "a conqueror" only after he places his foot physically upon the neck of the ungodly. And, Christ is only successful after the wicked world is made subject to a carnal "Messianic kingdom." The hope of Christian Reconstructionism is this future earthly kingdom of Christ. The youth are not prepared for the future reality which Scripture presents. Like the proverbial grasshopper, they foolishly fiddle away in the hope of a never-ending summer, while winter's icy blast lurks around the corner. The youth are not prepared for this world or the next.

Against this foolish dream, Christ reveals that he is victorious now. Christ has been vanquishing the kingdom of darkness in order to establish his own kingdom since his exultation. Christ has been spiritually successful gathering his elect from the sinful kingdom of Satan, sanctifying them through his Spirit, and preserving his church against all wickedness which would overthrow them. Christ's success is not measured carnally by how many accept the gospel, nor by counting how many are brought under its political and cultural influence. Christ teaches that he is victorious when each one of his elect are plucked from the kingdom of Satan while all others reject that same preaching. This victory is spiritual. The church is "more than conquerors" even though they may lose their life in this world either at the hands of enemies or through old age. Through God we shall do valiantly, for he it is that shall tread down our enemies (Ps. 60:12; 108:13).

Christ reveals he will indeed return again, that he currently sits in his resurrected body at God's right hand, and has been given all power in heaven and earth to direct all events in history toward his return which will be soon, i.e., the next great event in the history of salvation. When

Christ returns he will raise the bodies of the dead, unite them with the already resurrected soul, and make them a complete and fit instrument for the eternal reward handed down according to the works done in them—the elect for everlasting life with Christ in a new universe resurrected out of the old, and the reprobate for everlasting death apart from Christ in hell.

Preparation of the covenant youth in these biblical truths that describe their relationship to their victorious Christ provides comfort in life and death. Therefore, this preparation for the return of Christ includes instruction in the biblical signs of his coming; the worldwide preaching of the gospel, increasing lawlessness in the world and apostasy in the church which rejects that preaching, the arrival of the Antichrist, floods, earthquakes, war, disease and famine. These signs, when taught in the context of the believers' right relation to the victorious Christ will not frighten the youth, but only confirm within their sanctified souls the sure coming of Christ. They will begin to yearn for his return and express this groaning desire. "Even so, come Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

These biblical truths of Christ's return and the resurrection of our body, the church heartily confesses as its comfortable hope. We declare in the Belgic Confession, Art. 37, that "the consideration of this judgment, is justly terrible and dreadful to the wicked and ungodly, but *most desirable and comfortable to the righteous and elect.*" The Heidelberg Catechism commenting on the Apostles Creed in Q. 52 likewise teaches that biblical instruction in Christ's return brings comfort to the believer. It asks: "What *comfort* is it to thee that "Christ shall come again to judge the quick and the dead?" This comfort is the confession of the covenant youth that I "both body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ," the same Jesus Christ who is returning for me.

This lends urgency to every opportunity to provide this instruction, whether in the home, classroom, or pulpit. What use is teaching and preaching Jesus to the youth, if the fulfillment of his redemptive work is not included? What comfort will the youth have in this life, if we neglect to give instruction in the victorious Christ who as their covenant friend is returning to publicly vindicate them and live with them in perfect everlasting fellowship? What comfort do they receive if they see not that Christ and the church are victorious already now, regardless of earthly appearances? This biblical instruction, therefore, is our calling as parents, educators, and pastors. Without it, there will be only despair, unbelief, and fear among the youth. How shall the young direct their way? Thy word, O Lord, will safely lead, if in its wisdom they confide.

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