

Prophecy Pays: The Gospel Frees



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TTrue Story: A weary pastor hunches over his credit card statement. Small town, small congregation, small salary. The Lord may forgive his debts, but his bank surely won't. The bottom line is he's sinking deeper into the red each month, and the offering buckets portend famine. Bleak, he looks up at his family and sighs... "Well, time for a Sunday night series on Revelation. That should bring in something extra." The shame he feels is offset by their empty pantry.

BLOOD MOON WINDFALL

Another True Story: The excessively wealthy mega-church minister publishes yet another End Times prophecy book, this time focusing on the world-changing, apocalyptic events signaled by the series of forthcoming "Blood Moon" events in 2014 and 2015. The prophecies fail to be true. The day after the book is falsified, there is no retraction. Just a blowout sale that produces a windfall for the would-be prophet, who emerges unscathed from his fantasy forecasts.

PROPHECY PAYS

Whether it's a series of sermons, articles or books, the End Times prophecy industry is certainly marketable. Ministries that hold a

newspaper in one hand and the Bible in the other can proclaim, "This is that," and market their failed promises repeatedly. The truly predictable element seems to be the collective amnesia of their audience. In a generally cynical age, the credulity is stunning.

And our society's suggestibility to fraudulent claims is not restricted to Christian fortune-tellers. The hunger for someone—*anyone*—to provide a prognosis drives the market for pollsters, fund managers, sports betting, meteorologists, Tarot cards and "hype doomerism" (click-bait headlines predicting the date of no return).

Granted, the world appears to be unraveling before our eyes. And we should talk about why that is and what we can do. I'm not suggesting shoulder-shrugging fatalism or willful blindness to the crises we face. My point is that when a preacher misuses the Bible to fleece the sheep with "horror-scopes" of the coming apocalypse or the next election and leverages these for big bucks, they're a galaxy away from the gospel.

THE GOSPEL FREES

The WHY question is fairly simple. Humanity lives under a great shadow of fear—especially fear of

the future, fear of calamity, fear of death. Our anxiety about the unknown pleads for peace. But I maintain that the peace we need never comes from knowing some secret about the future that would fulfill our lust for certitude. The true peace we crave only comes from hearing and receiving the good news that we are held by Infinite Love.

Faith is not certitude in a prophetic prognosis. Faith is confidence in our Beloved that comes through the heart awakened by Love.

I started with stories about ministries and money. Ministries like PTM have chosen to resist the temptation and opt out of the guaranteed income of prophecy proceeds.

We believe that only the "perfect love [of Jesus Christ] drives out fear," so we're investing all our resources in that gospel message. I'll end with a bit of a bold ask. Would you help us help others with the real help of the Good News of Grace? □

In addition to his valued work on PTM's team, Brad Jersak is the Principal of St. Stephen's University, NB and author of numerous books, including the More Christlike series, available at ptm.org/books.