

A USER'S GUIDE TO BIBLICAL PROPHECY  
II TIMOTHY 2:14-16

INTRODUCTION:

- **This Just In: Vancouver Woman's Porridge Is Juuuuust Right**, June 19, 2006 , By Associated Press  
WEST VANCOUVER, B.C. - *It was a real-life version of Goldilocks and the Three Bears - only in reverse - when a woman came home to find a young bear eating oatmeal in her kitchen. The bear apparently entered through an open sliding glass door, broke a ceramic food container and started eating, West Vancouver police Sgt. Paul Skelton said. "It sounds like a nursery rhyme, doesn't it?" Skelton said. "At least we have a health-conscious bear on our hands."*  
*Three police officers who went to the home Thursday couldn't get the bear to budge, so authorities let the animal finish its meal.*
- **The Story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears**  
*Once upon a time, there was a little girl named Goldilocks. She went for a walk in the forest. Pretty soon, she came upon a house. She knocked and, when no one answered, she walked right in. At the table in the kitchen, there were three bowls of porridge. Goldilocks was hungry. She tasted the porridge from the first bowl. "This porridge is too hot!" she exclaimed. So, she tasted the porridge from the second bowl. "This porridge is too cold," she said. So, she tasted the last bowl of porridge. "Ahhh, this porridge is just right," she said happily and she ate it all up.*

This will be a fine parable for our study this morning: A USER'S GUIDE TO BIBLICAL PROPHECY

I. YOU DON'T WANT IT TOO HOT

Teachers who claim to have an inside track on the end times seem to specialize in three areas:

- *Antichrist naming*
- *Rapture dating*
- *Tribulation speculating* (William M. Alnor, *Soothsayers of the Second Advent*, Power Books, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1989, 17)

ANTICHRIST NAMING

- William Alnor has a chapter in his book about prophecy hype called, "Pinning the Tail on the Antichrist." That pin has poked Franklin Roosevelt, Henry Kissinger and Anwar Sadat.
- *(Ronald Wilson Reagan was among recent suspects because each name has six letters, forming the infamous 666),* (Elwood McQuaid, "The Future a Thing of the Past?", *Moody*, April 1990, 14)
- *[I]n the 1940s...Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini seemed to vie for the role of Antichrist...* (Josh McDowell, *The Bible Jesus Read*, Philip Yancey, Zondervan, 1999, 172)
- Starsbourg, France, October, 1988—Pope John Paul II was giving his key speech of a four-day tour of France. *Suddenly the Reverend Ian Paisley...jumped up and shouted, "I renounce you! I renounce you as the Antichrist!" Paisley was instantly grabbed by ushers, and an orange banner was torn from his hands. The banner read: Pope John Paul II, Antichrist.* (William M. Alnor, *Soothsayers of the Second Advent*, Power Books, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1989, 19)

RAPTURE DATING

- Edgar C. Whisenant sold a million copies of his book, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*. After that, he came back with a prediction for 1989.
- *[A] Korean leader predicted Christ's coming for October 1992. Thousands made preparations by leaving their jobs, dropping out of school, killing pets they did not want to leave behind, and even having abortions because they feared what might happen to their unborn children.* (John Walvoord, "Is Prophecy being Fulfilled Today?," *Moody*, September 1993, 64)

- Hinting at end-times developments, Pat Robertson announced in 1997, *I'm predicting that in the next four or five years we're going to have the greatest spiritual revival in the history of the world.* (CT interview with Pat Robertson, "Pat Robertson, Novelist," CT, September 1, 1997, 25)
- [I]n the 1840s...believers gathered on the mountaintops to await Christ's return; and in the 1400s and the 400s... (Josh McDowell, *The Bible Jesus Read*, Philip Yancey, Zondervan, 1999, 172)
- Jesus gave a prophecy in Matthew 24:32 about the leafing out of the fig tree, and predicts that *this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.* One Christian publication explains: *Fig tree is the national flower of Israel. Its leaves began to come out again by the Independence of Israel (May 14, 1948). Therefore, it means that all things will be fulfilled in a generation (around 50 years) after 1948. In other words, the end of this world will come before the year 2000 as prophesied in the Scriptures. Later in the brochure they announce the Tribulation as running from 1993-1999.*
- Hal Lindsey announced a 1948-1988 timeline. He has stated that *We live in the generation that will see Armageddon.* When 1988 passed uneventfully, he adjusted the span of a "generation" from 40 to 70 years. And instead of the clock starting with the independence of Israel in 1948, it was reset to start with the 1967 capture of Old Jerusalem by the Israeli army. (Gary DeMar, "Armageddon Now? Are Today's World Events Signs that the Rapture is Near?," *The Biblical Worldview*, January 1991, 2-3).
- When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, one television preacher identified that event as a precursor of Armageddon: *"It's a time to rejoice for Christians. We're going home."* (David Neff, "Apocalypse When?" CT, December 17, 1990, 15)

#### TRIBULATION SPECULATING

- Extreme prophetic episodes *...have turned people off to prophetic themes in general. The "Buzzard Tract," produced [in the eighties] and distributed by the hundreds of thousands, is just one example.*  
*Buzzards in the Megiddo area in Israel, the site of Armageddon, suddenly began to lay more eggs, announced one writer. He promoted this as a sure sign that Armageddon was at hand, so we had better prepare for the inevitable.*  
*There wasn't a feather of truth to the story, but enough people took it seriously to create fruitless speculation—and an occasion from ridicule by detractors.*  
 (Elwood McQuaid, "The Future a Thing of the Past?," *Moody*, April 1990, 14)
- Salem Kirban identified *the invasion of African "killer bees" into the United States as a fulfillment of Revelation 9, presaging the sign of the fifth trumpet.* (Josh McDowell, *The Bible Jesus Read*, Philip Yancey, Zondervan, 1999, 172)
- Family Radio founder Harold Camping says *that Christians are in the Great Tribulation and should depart from their congregations..*  
*"No longer are you to be under the spiritual rulership of the church...." He cites the injunction of Jesus for believers to flee a "Jerusalem" that has been "compassed with armies."* (Mark A. Kellner, "Camping: 'Leave church,'" CT, May 21, 2002, 21)
- Radio interview re. implanting ID chips in Mexican immigrants to sort out the illegals. It's already being done with pets. I'm quite sure that created a stir among prophecy buffs.
- The Jehovah Witnesses are coming to their district convention in the Tacoma Dome June 30-July 2 and July 7-9 for their district convention. And they're distributing 900,000 printed invitations door-to-door. *"Why now? Because we recognize how close it is to the culmination of the entire world system," said Peter Michas...[a JW] elder... Wars, natural disasters and other tumultuous events around the globe indicate that "the kingdom (of God) is like a freight train. It's on its way," he said.* (John Iwasaki, "Jehovah's Witnesses busy inviting everyone in region to convention in Tacoma," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, [http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/274437\\_jehovahswitnesses19.html](http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/274437_jehovahswitnesses19.html), Monday, June 19, 2006)

#### II. YOU DON'T WANT IT TOO COLD

**Titus 2:13**, while we wait for the blessed hope-- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ...

**I Thessalonians 1:10**, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead-- Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ—a double meaning!

- a revelation about Christ
- a revelation which comes from Christ Note the title: *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*
  - It is a revelation of truth about Christ Himself, as disclosure of future events, that is, His second coming when Christ will be revealed. It is as well a revelation which comes from Christ. (John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1966, 35)

**Revelation 19:10-11**, *At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." 11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.*

*Christ is not only the major theme of the Scriptures but also the central theme of prophecy...At this point in the book of Revelation the climax of the revelation is reached with the presentation of Jesus Christ as the glorified King of kings and Lord of lords. In keeping with the subject of the book itself, "a revelation of Jesus Christ," All which precedes Revelation 19:11 is in some sense introductory and that which follows is an epilogue-- In many respects the scene which now follows, namely, the second coming of Christ, is not only the high point of the book of Revelation but in many respects the high point of all history. (John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1966, 274)*

**Revelation 1:3**, *Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.*

- .Prophecy teacher David Lewis laments, "The tragedy is that the message [of prophecy] has been attacked by its enemies, eroded by its friends and ignored by everybody else." (William M. Alnor, *Soothsayers of the Second Advent*, Power Books, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1989, 197)

### III. YOU WANT IT JUST RIGHT!

II Timothy 2:14-16, *Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. 15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. 16 Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.*

- On one hand--Don't look for signs!
  - **Acts 1:6-8**, *So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them: "It is **not for you to know** the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses...*
- On the other hand--Do look for signs!
  - **Matthew 24:42**, *"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.*
  - *Though there are no signs preceding the Rapture, we have good reason to think it could happen soon. The Bible describes clearly the end-time events that follow the Rapture. As we see world trends pointing to the fulfillment of those events, our confidence grows that the rapture must be even nearer. (John Walvoord, "Is Prophecy Being Fulfilled Today?," *Moody*, September 1993, 66)*
  - **I Peter 4:7**, *The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.*
  - **I Peter 5:8**,

Provocative observations:

- The feasibility of a European alliance  
*One specific prophecy about the end times concerns a confederation of 10 nations emerging in the area of the ancient Roman Empire (Dan. 7:7, 24). This prediction once seemed hard to believe. "Europe could never be reunited politically," the skeptics said. "Those countries have been at*

- war throughout history....[T]oday few people doubt the possibility of a political confederation in Europe. (John Walvoord, "Is Prophecy being Fulfilled Today?," *Moody*, September 1993, 66)
- [When the European Common Market began to form, excitement really heated up—the ten toes of Daniel's beast!—only to calm down a bit when the eleventh and twelfth members gained admittance. (Philip Yancey, *The Bible Jesus Read*, Zondervan, 1999, 172)]
  - The feasibility of a global government
  - Another prophecy that points to the nearness of the Rapture is the development of a dominant world government. According to Scripture, a despotic world leader will arise out of the future European confederation (Dan. 7:23-25; Rev. 13:5-8). Never before in history has such a global government seemed so likely.
 

*To have a world government, rapid communication and transportation are necessary. The Gulf War demonstrated advances in both areas. When Iraq invaded Kuwait, President Bush knew immediately. Within hours the first airborne troops has landed in Saudi Arabia. Such a rapid deployment would have been impossible 50 years ago.....The stage is now set for precisely what the Bible predicts—a dictator who can control the entire world.* (John Walvoord, "Is Prophecy being Fulfilled Today?," *Moody*, September 1993, 66)
  - The feasibility of a northern alliance invasion of Israel
    - Another interesting end-time prophecy regards the invasion of Israel by an alliance "from the far north" (Ezek. 38:6)...[T]he Central Asian republics directly north of Israel are Muslim. They have an inherent hatred for Israel, and if conditions were right, would join an attack. This invasion will take place after the Rapture, ending the peaceful half of the seven years before the Second Coming. (John Walvoord, "Is Prophecy being Fulfilled Today?," *Moody*, September 1993, 66)
  - The recent focus on the Middle East. Once the Crusades subsided, The Middle East became pretty much a quiet, rural backwater that attracted virtually no notice on the world scene. How much that has changed. The eyes of the world are riveted on the Middle East. We hear very little about what happens in Africa, or China, or Indonesia, or Eastern Europe. But if a bomb goes off in a Tel Aviv restaurant, it's in our morning headlines. It's on the 5 o'clock news.

*More developments leading to the fulfillment of prophecy have taken place in the past 50 years than in the previous 1,000.--John Walvoord*

#### HINTS ON DOING PROPHECY "JUST RIGHT"

##### 1) Read prophecy like you read the newspaper.

- Normal interpretation
- Literal, Historical, Critical.
  - Martin Luther: *[T]he Holy Spirit is the plainest writer and speaker in heaven and earth and therefore his words cannot have more than one, and that the very simplest sense, which we call the literal, ordinary, natural sense.*
- Occam's razor
- Beware allegorism
  - Sophie says, "...you told me the New Testament is based on fabrications." Langdon smiled, "Sophie, every faith in the world is based on fabrication. That is the definition of faith—acceptance of that which we imagine to be true, that which we cannot prove. Every religion describes God through metaphor, allegory, and exaggeration, from the early Egyptians through modern Sunday school. Metaphors are a way to help our minds process the unprocessable. The problems arise when we begin to believe literally in our own metaphors. (Dan Brown, *The DaVinci Code*, Doubleday, NY, 2003, 341-342)
  - Origin on Exodus 1:22-2:10, *Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, represented the devil while the male and female children of the Hebrews represented the rational and animal faculties of mankind. Pharaoh wished to destroy all the males, that is the seeds of rationality and spiritual science through which the soul tends to and seeks heavenly things. However, he wished to preserve all the females alive, that is, all those animal propensities of man, through which he becomes carnal and devilish. Thus, wherever men live in luxuries, banquetings, pleasures, and sensual*

gratifications, one can be [assured—sp?] that there the king of Egypt has slain all the males and preserved all the females alive. (Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 199)

- During the reformation, Luther denounced the allegories of Origen, and called allegory “the scum on Scripture,” “a monkey-game,” and “a nose of wax,” that is, something that can be bent any way desired. (Marvin R. Wilson, “Allegory to the Rescue,” *CT*, October 7, 1988, 63)
- Don’t be deceived by postmodern hermeneutics.
  - This is not a poem: Ken and the Genesis poem comment. The Jesus method
  - **Interview with Jane Goodall,**
    - *You are about to publish your spiritual memoir. Do you find any conflict between science and religion?*  
*I’ve never felt that. There is no conflict. I was brought up to believe in a Christian god. At the same time, my uncle was a doctor and we were surrounded by books about science, so I believe in evolution, too. I believe we descended from a common ancestor—a chimp-like ape...*  
*So you see Genesis as a story of evolution?*  
*Yes. If you read the Bible, Jesus talked in parables. If you want to, you can see that the whole story of Genesis is pretty accurate in reflecting the process of evolution. But it would be a mistake to take it literally, for heaven’s sake.*  
(“Front Lines,” *Modern maturity*, November-December, 1999, 26)
    - **Matthew 19:3,** *Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?” 4 “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ {4 Gen. 1:27} 5 and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? {5 Gen. 2:24} 6 So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”*
    - Authorial intent is still valid
    - **Jacque Derrida’s** embarrassment. This French philosopher and literary deconstructionist published an article. Derrida championed the idea that *the meaning of a text is not in the author’s intention, but in what the reader finds it saying to him or her.* Another author, named John Searle wrote an 11-page response to Derrida’s article, *challenging and criticizing several of his conceptions....In his ninety-three-page reply, Derrida objected that Searle’s statement had been unfair to him, and had at several points misunderstood and misstated his position. He even asserted at one point that what he had meant should have been clear and obvious to Searle....[S]ome of Derrida’s followers are embarrassed by this inconsistency...* (Millard Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 1998, 156)

#### HINTS ON DOING PROPHECY “JUST RIGHT”

1) Read prophecy like you read the newspaper.

#### 2) Expect God to keep His promises.

- E.g., forever means forever.  
**I Kings 8:56,** *“Praise be to the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses.*
- Cf. Daniel 9:20-24, The Seventy Weeks (cf. Jeremiah). Note the **ultimate achievements** listed:
  - To finish transgressions
  - To put an end to sin
  - To atone for wickedness
  - To bring in everlasting righteousness
  - To seal up vision and prophecy
  - To anoint the Most Holy Place
- **Cf. Isaiah 65:25,** *The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,” says the LORD.*

#### HINTS ON DOING PROPHECY “JUST RIGHT”

- 1) Read prophecy like you read the newspaper.
- 2) Expect God to keep His promises.

**3) Keep Christ in sharp focus.**

- The Revelation of Jesus Christ
- The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy
- The scarlet thread of redemption running through all Scripture

HINTS ON DOING PROPHECY “JUST RIGHT”

- 1) Read prophecy like you read the newspaper.
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**4) Factor in the “mystery” nature of the Church.**

- Ecclesiastical principle: The church is not Israel—is a “mystery”
- We get made fun of for believing that Jesus is going to Rapture His Church before the Tribulation. The Covenant theologians think all the saints are going to go through the Resurrection and that there will be just one resurrection. But at the centerpiece of that thinking is their belief that God is done with ethnic Israel and that we as the Church have inherited all the Old Testament promises that God made to Israel. That we **are** Israel.
- But we should not be surprised that the church goes off the world scene as abruptly as it came on. We should take a hint from the fact that the New Testament calls then Church one of God’s “mysteries” i.e., something that was not known until God chose to reveal it as a surprise. For thousands of years God’s people knew that the only way to get close to God was to join the Israel club. Then God spoke through the Apostle Paul. **Ephesians 3:6**, *This **mystery** is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. 8 ... this grace was given me...to make plain to everyone the administration of this **mystery**, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.*
- Likewise, the very idea of the Rapture is one of those unforeseen “mystery” surprises. **I Corinthians 15:51**, *Listen, I tell you a **mystery**: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*
- But after the Rapture, the Israel Club is coming back strong. **Romans 11:25**, *I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so **all Israel** will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.*

HINTS ON DOING PROPHECY “JUST RIGHT”

- 1) Read prophecy like you read the newspaper.
- 2) Expect God to keep His promises.
- 3) Keep Christ in sharp focus.
- 4) Factor in the “mystery” nature of the Church.

**5) Don’t become a prophecy fathead—Serve!**

- Keep serving/proactivity principle.
- I Peter 4:7, *The end of all things is near. [SO WHAT???] **Therefore...***
  - **pray**
  - **8 love each other deeply...**
  - **9 Offer hospitality.....**
  - **10 serve others...**
- Martin Luther was asked, *What would you do if you knew Jesus was coming back tomorrow? He answered, “I’d plant a tree!”*

HINTS ON DOING PROPHECY “JUST RIGHT”

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- 5) Don’t become a prophecy fathead—Serve!

**6) Let prophetic hope purify you.**

- **I John 3:2**, *Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, {2 Or when it is made known} we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.*

**CONCLUSION:**

- **Howard Hendricks**, *I'm acquainted with many students who are afraid they're going to strain their brain...to wear that baby out through misuse. But I have news for them. I once asked a pathologist friend in Philadelphia, "Have you seen many brains?"*  
*"Hundreds of them," he said.*  
*"Have you ever seen one worn out?"*  
*"I've never seen one even slightly used," he answered.*  
*So go ahead and run the risk.* (Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives*, Multnomah, 1987, 47)
- [I]n 1988...prophecy teacher David A. Lewis published a "Manifesto on Date Setting." It says...  
*Therefore we, the undersigned hereby demand that all date setting and date suggesting cease immediately. Let abstinence from this type of speculation prevail until the Lord comes.*  
*We absolutely must stop this type of activity or there will be few who will take the message of prophecy seriously.* (William M. Alnor, *Soothsayers of the Second Advent*, Power Books, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1989, 194-195)

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June 25, 2006