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The End is Near? The False Teaching of Harold Camping

The church is not to be arrogantly setting dates, but instead to be eagerly waiting for him. Of that we can be truly certain.

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Harold Camping is now warning the world that the Day of Judgment will begin at about 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 21, 2011. The 89-year-old founder of Family Radio has made such pronouncements before, most recently in 1994. He now says that he simply miscalculated then, but he is absolutely certain that he has the right calculation now. You have been warned.



Actually, millions of people in America have been warned through Camping's radio program and by means of the more than 1,200 billboards his ministry has put up across the nation. According to press reports, Family Radio has put up 2,000 billboards in other nations, as well.

Camping is no stranger to controversy, but this one has caught national and international attention. He was wrong before, but this time he is absolutely certain that he is right. As he told *New York* magazine:

"God has given sooo much information in the Bible about this, and so many proofs, and so many signs, that we know it is absolutely going to happen without any question at all. There's nothing in the Bible that God has ever prophesied — there's many things that he prophesied would happen and they always have happened — but there's nothing in the Bible that holds a candle to the amount of information to this tremendous truth of the end of the world. I would be absolutely in rebellion against God if I thought anything other than it is absolutely going to happen without any question."

If you know the Bible and this statement confuses you, you are in good company. Harold Camping believes that God has revealed to him the exact dates of biblical events and the timeline of the judgment. He says that God revealed some "exquisite proof" that enabled him to determine a "finished product" timeline that ends on May 21, this coming Saturday.

As Michael S. Rosenwald of *The Washington Post* explains, Camping "says he came up with the very precise date of May 21 through a mathematical calculation that would probably crash Google's computers." Further, Camping's mathematical formula "involves, among other things, the dates of floods, the signals of numbers in the Bible, multiplication, addition and subtraction thereof." As many have noted, the math seems to make sense only to Harold Camping.

Yet, in a strange way, this just serves to affirm Camping in his teaching. On his website he states:

However, it was not until a very few years ago that the accurate knowledge of the entire timeline of history was revealed to true believers by God from the Bible. This timeline extends all the way to the end of time. During these past several years God has been revealing a great many truths, which have been completely hidden in the Bible until this time when we are so near the end of the world.

These "true believers" turn out to be Harold Camping and his disciples. Others, even professing Christians, will be in big trouble when Saturday comes, he believes.

The Christian church has seen this kind of false teaching before. William Miller and his Adventist followers (known, surely enough, as Millerites) believed that Christ would return on March 21, 1844. In the 1970s, popular Christian preachers and writers predicted that Christ would return on various dates now long in the past. All this is embarrassing enough, but now we have the teachings of Harold Camping to deal with. Given the public controversy, many people are wondering how Christians should think about his claims.

First, Christ specifically admonished his disciples not to claim such knowledge. In Acts 1:7, Jesus said, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority." In Matthew 24:36, Christ taught similarly: "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only."

To state the case plainly, these two verses explicitly forbid Christians to claim the knowledge of such dates and times. Jesus clearly taught that the Father has not revealed such dates and timing, but has reserved that knowledge for himself. It is an act of incredible presumptuousness to claim that a human knows such a date, or has determined God's timing by any means.

Second, the Bible does not contain hidden codes that we are to find and decipher. The Bible has been given to us in order that we might know the truth, and the truth is clearly revealed in its pages. We are not to look for hidden patterns of words, numbers, dates, or anything else. The Bible's message is plain and requires no mathematical computation for its understanding. The claim that one has found a hidden code or system in the Bible is an insult to the Bible as the Word of God.

Third, Christians are indeed to be looking for Christ to return and seeking to be found faithful when Christ comes. We are not to draw a line in history and set a date, but we are to be about the Father's business, sharing the Gospel and living faithful Christian lives. We are not to sit on rooftops like the Millerites, waiting for Christ's return. We are to be busy doing what Christ has commanded us to do.

In Hebrews 9:28, we are taught that Christ will come a second time "to save those who are eagerly waiting for him." That is the faithful Christian response to the New Testament teachings about Christ's coming. The church is not to be arrogantly setting dates, but instead to be eagerly waiting for him. Of that we can be truly certain.

I am always glad to hear from readers. Write me at mail@albertmohler.com. Follow regular updates on Twitter at www.twitter.com/AlbertMohler

Michael S. Rosenwald, "[This Time, It's for Real, Believers Say: Doomsday Coming This Month](#)," *The Washington Post*, Thursday, May 5, 2011.

"[A Conversation with Harold Camping, Prophet of Judgment Day](#)," *New York Magazine*, Wednesday, May 11, 2011.

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