

ARE YOU STILL HERE?

Jon Macon

By now, all of us are probably aware from billboards or the news that May 21, 2011 was predicted to be “Judgment Day.” An 89 year-old man named Harold Camping is the man behind this prediction. He is from California, (which should come as a shock to no one!) and is president of a religious broadcasting network called Family Radio. It is also not surprising that he preaches a form of the doctrine of premillennialism. Adherents to this false doctrine believe and teach that we are living in the age prior to a thousand-year earthly reign of Jesus Christ. They believe that he will establish an earthly kingdom when he returns. In fact, they believe that Christ came the first time to establish that earthly kingdom, but the Jews unexpectedly rejected him, so he set up the church as a temporary organization until the Jews are ready to receive him as their earthly king. They also say that shortly before Christ comes back, the “Rapture” will occur, at which time those who are saved on the earth will suddenly be taken straight to Heaven. According to their doctrine, those who are raptured will instantly vanish, body and all. This is the idea behind a popular premillennialist bumper sticker which says, “If you see this car with no driver, then the Rapture has occurred.” The so-called Rapture is allegedly a private event, preceding the public Second Coming of Christ. Harold Camping predicted that the Rapture would occur at precisely 6 p.m. on May 21. He said that the event would occur time zone by time zone, with approximately 3% of the population (presumably including himself), representing all the righteous on the earth, disappearing as they were caught up to Heaven. In his own twist on premillennial doctrine, Camping has also prophesied that God will utterly destroy the earth on October 21, 2011. At that time, all those who weren’t raptured on May 21 will be annihilated, as Camping does not believe in the existence of Hell for the unbelievers. Therefore, if you are currently reading this article, then either, 1) Camping’s prophecy failed, or 2) you weren’t one of the 3% who were raptured, in which case your existence will come to an end in 5 months! Of course, we know which one it is. For example, earthquakes were predicted to roll across the globe beginning at 6 p.m. on Kiritimati Island in the Pacific island nation of Kiribati. That prophecy has already failed before this article has been made available for reading. It will be interesting to see if Camping tries to make himself disappear today after his failure is complete! He based his predictions by performing mathematical calculations from numbers contained in the Bible. Obviously, his math was off! Most importantly, in trying to find something the Bible does *not* actually say (when the world will end), he has completely ignored what the Bible plainly *does* say. Here are some examples:

- 1) Jesus did *not* come to this earth the first time to set up an earthly kingdom, but rather a spiritual one, which is his church. In John 18:36, Christ said, “*My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.*” The church is this kingdom that Jesus told Peter he would build: “*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto*

ARE YOU STILL HERE?

(continued)

thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 16:18-19). After the church was established on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, the kingdom is thereafter spoken of in scripture as already being in existence (Col 1:13; Rev 1:9).

2) The church of Christ, which *is* the kingdom of God (Matt 16:18-19), is not a temporary organization, but is eternal. Luke 1:32-33 says of Christ, “*He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*” Daniel 2:44 foretold that God would “*set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed.*”

Jesus also said that the gates of Hades would not prevail against his church (Matt 16:18).

3) The Jews did *not* reject Christ as an earthly king when he came to the earth. In fact, after Jesus miraculously fed the 5,000, John 6:14-15 records that the Jews tried to *force* Jesus to be an earthly king, but Christ is the one who rejected that (since that was not the nature of the kingdom he came to establish). “*Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.*”

4) The word “rapture” does not occur in the Bible. The premillennial concept of the “Rapture” is also not taught anywhere in scripture. When Jesus comes back, “*all that are in the graves shall hear his voice*” (John 5:28-29), and “*every eye shall see him*” (Rev 1:7). At that time, Christ’s faithful disciples who are alive on the earth will be caught up to meet him in the air *after* the resurrection of the dead in Christ (1 Thes 4:13-17).

5) Jesus said that the day and hour of his return “*knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only*” (Matt 24:36). He said, “*Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh*” (Matt 24:44). Harold Camping is but the latest in a long line of false prophets who have failed in their predictions about when the end of the world would occur. The founders of the Seventh Day Adventists (William Miller in 1843 and 1844), Jehovah’s Witnesses (Charles Taze Russell in 1914), and Mormons (Joseph Smith in the 1830s) all falsely predicted the end of the world in their lifetimes. Pat Robertson is another one, as he once said the world would end in 1982. Do you ever wonder why these people *always* prophecy that the end will come in *their* lifetime? By the way, the next big prediction of the end of the world is December 21, 2012, because some conclude this to be the end of the ancient Mayan calendar (an idea which is rejected by present-day Mayans). So once October 21, 2011 passes without event, then we barely have a year to feel relieved! In all seriousness, we need to do as Jesus said, and not listen to these false prophets, but rather be ready always for the end of our time on this earth, because none of us knows when that will be.