

Problems With Some Of Harold Camping's Theology

A Review Of Some Doctrinal Problems Of

Family Radio's President & Founder

Including Issues He Relates To His May 21, 2011 Judgment Day Prediction



Note: This article was written over ten years ago (on or around May 22, 2007). See the Internet Archive "wayback machine" for confirmation of this:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070522053508/http://comingintheclouds.org/studyhelps/haroldc.htm>

This article was updated on 5/24/11 from the original posting in 2007 and some off-topic subjects have been edited out.

Introduction

Before I get into what I believe are Mr. Camping's doctrinal problems, I wish to point out some things that I think a lot of Christians who are upset with Mr. Camping need to hear:

1.

Mr. Camping is the general manager and chairman of the board of Family Radio so he is entitled to say what he wants and do things his way, at least from the world's point of view. As a professing believer in Christ he has an obligation to God to speak his conscience as he see things, which may be different than you see things at times. Would you have the courage to take some of the unpopular stands that he has taken, knowing that you would lose a lot of support and knowing that people would lash out at you?

2.

Mr. Camping and Open Forum is not all there is to Family Radio. There are many fine programs and dear Christians within Family Radio. We must remember that perhaps many Family Radio employees disagree with Harold on various issues and yet still work there. However, some have left the ministry and probably had to leave for not agreeing with Harold on his "end of the church age" theory several years before May 21 2011.

3.

You as a Christian should be scrutinizing everything you read and listen to,

holding onto that which is good (helpful) and weeding out that which is bad (erroneous). It is not just Family Radio's job to do this. It is your job. You need to be thankful to God for the areas of ministry that Family Radio is faithfully engaged in.

4.

It is not your job to bad-mouth or crusade against other believers. You should warn others of false teachers, false prophets and false doctrine. However, you are commanded in the Bible to pray for those who you have a problem with and bring correction where appropriate. If you have a problem with Harold Camping and if Open Forum does not prove to be an appropriate arena in which to biblically address your concerns, then write a letter (Family Radio, PO Box 2140, Oakland, CA 94621-9985) or make a phone call (1-800-543-1495) to Mr. Camping or even post an accurate, bible-based, and graciously worded article on the Internet as I have done.

Are YOU checking out Harold's teachings, like he tells you to?

In years past, Mr. Camping has done an excellent job on the Open Forum program that he hosts, of teaching on the doctrines of grace and other important Bible doctrines. However, he teaches on several other topics as if he has the same depth of knowledge, when scripture bears out that he does not. To whom much is given much is required, and many people take great credence in what Mr. Camping teaches and they buy into his positions on scriptures without carefully considering all the Bible has to say about those positions. Also, Mr. Camping does not usually allow dissenters a fair hearing on his Open Forum program to present opposing views. Instead, he mutes their incoming calls so he can speak over them. So, for the benefit of the folks who have been indoctrinated by Harold Camping, this paper is being presented. Links to other web pages are provided which further develop the topics from a Biblical perspective.

Please keep in mind that several of the doctrinal errors of Mr. Camping apply to most bible teachers and pastors of our day and age. Christ's flock really needs to understand this. Just because many well known and well respected teachers adhere to a particular doctrine and just because they can present some fairly convincing arguments for their views, does not mean they are correct. And YOU must not presume you are not being misled and YOU must not presume you have properly sorted everything out. YOU probably adhere to one or more of the erroneous doctrines of Mr. Camping. Read ahead and you will see what I mean.

Is the Church age really over?

Mr. Camping has declared (indirectly, by his great confidence in his conclusions) that God has revealed to him that the church age is over. Sure, he believes that that revelation is through the scriptures and through the Holy Spirit as God indeed reveals biblical truth to all His children - as He sees fit.

However, Mr. Camping believes that in the last days, God is opening up more of the meaning of scripture than in ages before (which may be very true) and he is one of the fortunate folks to whom so much of it is revealed, much more than the rest of the body of Christ. This particular teaching of Mr. Camping's about the end of the Church age is that churches should disband and form something he calls fellowships, which is basically a New Testament paradigm local church, but without authority. This would mean no elders, no deacons, no discipline, no communion, no baptisms.

The questions that arise from this new teaching include:

1.

Has he received a "special revelation" from the Lord concerning this or any other aspect of this new teaching?

2.

How does he deal with Scriptures that say we are to celebrate the Lord's supper til He comes (1Cor 11:26)?

3.

Does he understand what the "church" is supposed to be, Biblically, in the first place? (see the next item)

4.

Is it necessary to leave a church (the "corporate church" as Mr. Camping says) in order to be saved?

We will examine some of Mr. Camping's doctrines below.

Where is the Holy Spirit?

Mr. Camping says that the Holy Spirit is no longer operating in local churches to save people...

"However, 2 Thess 2 indicated there will be a time when the Holy Spirit will be taken out of the midst. We must understand then that the Holy Spirit will be taken out of the temple. That is, He will remove Himself from the congregations and denominations that had become a part of the temple of God." [1]

Isn't the Holy Spirit dwelling within individual believers, not entities like congregations, denominations, buildings, or IRS approved non-profit corporations?...

Acts 17:24 "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands"
Luke 17:21 "Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."

Is it necessary to leave a church in order to be saved?

"The presence of the Holy Spirit is to guide the work of the church. More importantly He is to apply the Word of God as it is faithfully preached to the hearts of those whom God has elected to salvation. However, if the Holy Spirit is no longer working in the church it means no one can become saved as the result of the preaching in that church. This is so, because God is no longer present to apply the Word to the hearts of the unsaved. Effectively the candlestick has been removed. This is so even though there still is plenty of spiritual bread and water. There is still faithful preaching. That is why the believers are commanded to come out of Judea and Jerusalem." [1]

That sounds like you must DO something to get saved. Mr. Camping is basically saying "You must LEAVE the local church otherwise God cannot save you. If you don't cooperate with God - and get out of your local church - now that God (as Mr. Camping claims) has stopped using the churches to evangelize the world, then God isn't going to save you." Mr. Camping may not realize it but his new theory on the Church has created a works gospel where salvation depends upon the sinner cooperating with God and going somewhere where the Holy Spirit is, or at least leaving somewhere where the Holy Spirit is not operating. What if a lost soul is listening to Family Radio's bible reading program while inside a conventional church. Will God refuse to save that soul because the sinner is in the wrong place? **What do we have here now Harold? Salvation by location?**

Who defines a high place?

Mr. Camping contends that the reason why God is not using any churches any more is because they have "high places" by which he means that have false doctrines that they won't let go of. But what about the false doctrines that Family Radio adheres to? Is Family Radio 100% correct in all they teach and preach? Or has Mr. Camping made a high place, and idol that is, out of himself and his ministry where he views his ministry as far "purer" than any local church? (something that occurs in many if not all Christian-like cults). Also, is he correct in saying that his ministry is not part of the "corporate" church? Yes, there are most likely true believers there who are part of the invisible church but at the same time, there are probably more unbelievers in the Family Radio ministry (behind the scenes, that is) than in a small close-knit local congregation that is faithful to the Word of God. That is because Family Radio is not a true local church in that it does not practice church discipline, which is a God-ordained means of ridding local churches of error and sin.

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Recently, due to his ideas about the death of the church, Mr. Camping has dissolved his local church and turned it into something he calls a "fellowship"

that does not have elders, church discipline, baptisms or communion. Maybe what Mr. Camping needs to do is abandon his fellowship and instead, turn his ministry into a biblical local church that practices church discipline and has other checks and balances (like a plurality of elders) that keep one man from having so much control over the thoughts and lives of others and it would provide an environment that enhances the ability of other saints to use their gifts - in particular, those whose gifts may be the same as Mr. Camping's - i.e. teaching.

The death of the Church and the death of communion

Most institutional churches are as dead as they can get and have been dead for centuries. Those who are Christ's are to celebrate His death until He comes. As long as there are two or more believers on earth who are local to each other, there is a local "body". As long as there is a local body, those believers are to break bread together, *as a meal* and as a memorial ceremony of the Lord's death and soon return. If we have a proper biblical understanding of the Lord's supper we would know that it is not to end. Christians are nowhere told to not *eat* any longer, to not eat *together* any longer, to not *give thanks* for their physical food and their spiritual food (and thanks for their salvation and their Saviour) any longer. And yet this is what needs to be done, if one is to believe Mr. Camping's teaching on communion with respect to the end of the church age.

"... God Himself interrupted the temple service by totally destroying Jerusalem and the temple in the year 587 B.C. God destroyed Jerusalem and the temple as a judgment on Judah. This judgment occurred because they had not removed the high places. Likewise the New Testament commands which should be obeyed within the churches and congregations until He comes can no longer be obeyed because God has brought judgment upon the institution of the church. Thus God has effectively ended the possibility of the observance of the New Testament ceremonial laws - water baptism and the Lord's supper." [2]

Is Mr. Camping making a valid argument for the death of the Church by comparing it to the literal destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem? God not only *effectively*, but *literally* ended the observance of (not just the *possibility* of the observance of) the old testament animal sacrifices in the Temple in Jerusalem with the destruction of the temple. God brings judgment on individual churches by granting them apostate leaders who scratch the itching ears of the congregation. We are playing God when we speak with authority - an authority that I don't think God has granted to any of us - when we say we know that all churches are under God's judgment.

Ecclesiology - what is supposed to happen at a church meeting on the Lord's day?

Mr. Camping has always had a conventional but wrong understanding of how to do church. He has been so much a part of the institutional church environment that apparently he doesn't realize that he has learned an improper view of ecclesiology. If he did a proper study he would learn that NT churches primarily met in homes and were highly interactive and they did not have a clergy/laity system. Neither did they have elders who played "Simon Says" every Sunday, forbidding the rest of the local body from participating (except in a limited way on command). Believers in the NT churches were very involved in their meetings as can be seen in 1 Corinthians chapters 11 through 14. See here for more information on biblical patterns for doing church.

Only when we realize that the local church is to be patterned after the family and not after a spectator sport, will we see a problem with Mr. Camping's advice when he tells Open Forum listeners that they can fellowship around their radios on Sunday. It is one thing to encourage believers to listen to fairly sound Christian radio programs - and that is good advice if they cannot find any like-minded believers locally to spend the Lord's day with. It is entirely another matter to refer to listening to a radio as "fellowship".

Spirit beings - where does he get all his ideas from?

Mr. Camping (along with many well known bible teachers) seems to know an awful lot about angels, demons, and Satan... far more than can be found in the pages of the Bible. And he frequently blames the devil for many things that God clearly takes credit for in the Bible. Mr. Camping (and everyone else for that matter) should stick to a strictly Biblical discussion, and should indulge in some exhaustive word studies to expand his understanding of what God has to say, as well. His teachings on spirit beings, like the teachings of so many other's, rely more into the traditions of the Catholic Church and other extra biblical speculations than on the direct teachings of Scripture.

See these links for a bible study that looks at scripture references to angels, demons and the attributes of God in more depth than one normally hears from the pulpit and from radio preachers:

[A Look At Angels & Demons](#)

[The God Nobody Knows](#)

One man show - contrary to Biblical pattern

By his own admission over the air, Mr. Camping has not and never plans to disciple anyone to assist him on the Open Forum program. And yet scripture says there is safety in the multitude of counselors (Proverbs 11:14) and Christ sent His disciples out by two. This is very problematic, since it causes people

to focus too much on him, rather than on Christ and on the Bible as the only authority. As a result, he is viewed as the authority and he can and does squash questions that he does not want to address by muting callers who challenge his teachings. Some people need to be muted when they are being argumentative, but others are merely trying to bring needed correction, which he claims to desire and be open to.

A dangerous spiritual combination exists any time you have these ingredients:

a charismatic leader who controls lots of money and other resources
a leader who can use his authority to filter out negative feedback (as Mr. Camping does on the Open Forum)

an organization where there are basically no checks and balances with respect to the top man

an organization that says it is more faithful than the rest of Christendom, including churches that hold to beliefs that are not much different than those of the organization

Enormous amounts of money are coming into Family Radio from people around the world who have no control over where that money is going, how it is to be used and where church discipline cannot be practiced. Mr. Camping is not accountable to a single listener as far as I know and he is not even accountable to the president of his school of the Bible. This is spiritually very dangerous.

Dealing with error properly

While it is proper and necessary to correct a brother and to warn others of bad teaching if we are unable to dissuade someone from a wrong viewpoint, it is not appropriate for Christians to treat each other unkindly or with contempt. The writers of the New Testament often pointed out error and they warned of bad teachers but they did not approve of uncharitable behavior as we see here:

Colossians 4:6 - "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

Ephesians 4:32 - "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Let us take heed of the words of the apostle Paul quoted above and do our utmost to avoid the world's way of dealing with those we disagree with. We should avoid name calling, sarcasm, and other forms of speech that do not glorify our holy God. We should use language befitting ambassadors for Christ.

The end result of Harold's preoccupation

What has happened to the ministry of Mr. Camping as a result of his

preoccupation with date setting and biblical timelines is that he has done just the opposite of what John the Baptist said we Christians should do. Speaking of Christ, **John the Baptist said: “He must increase, but I must decrease.” [John 3:30]** Mr. Camping has drawn an enormous amount of attention to himself and his pet research project and in so doing, has given the Gospel - the doctrines of Grace - a back seat in his ministry. This should tell you something, i.e. that all is not well with that ministry.

Recommendations

We believe Mr. Camping should humbly step aside, assume a less visible position in the ministry, and assist others in training up his successors. Sadly, he has made what had been a “more faithful than most” ministry look and sound more like a cult than a herald of God’s kingdom. He has brought great distress and grief to those who worked so hard along side him, to make the ministry a God glorifying beacon of truth. The Open Forum - much the same as happened in 1994 - is again focused more upon Mr. Camping’s latest revelations than on the Bible, and on Christ and him crucified, a clear violation of the scriptural mandate so succinctly stated by John the Baptist:

“He must increase, but I must decrease.” [John 3:30]

At one time, there were undoubtedly several qualified teachers within Family Radio who received only a fraction of the time to teach (if any time at all) that Mr. Camping bestows upon himself. For example, Gabriel Otero, Tom Schaff or Joe Jackowitz? We must ask ourselves why it is that Mr. Camping allots so little air time to any other Bible teachers and preachers on his stations and so much time to himself. Shouldn’t he be spending more time examining and editing some of the recorded programs his ministry airs - programs that come from pastors and teachers who may not even believe the doctrines of grace and who perhaps should not even be on the air?

Be a Berean!

Acts 17:11 - “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

I will wrap up this article with an obvious but often ignored truism:

If we spend more time reading and studying our Bibles than listening to religious celebrities, we are less likely to be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.

In Christ’s service,
brother RM Kane

REFERENCES

- [1] The End Of The Church Age And After, Chapter 8, page 107
- [2] The End Of The Church Age And After, Chapter 13, page 232