

Where Satan Reigns

The Blasphemy of Harold Camping

The Big Lie

Harold Camping has lately been preaching a blasphemous heresy in which he claims that God is done working through the church on earth. Now he has written a pamphlet, "Has the Era of the Church Age Come to an End?" in which he lays out the main arguments for his teaching. Typical of his long established teaching methods, Camping sets up straw man arguments that he can then knock down with ease and flair to "prove" his point. He has done this with subject after subject over many years, and by using his own peculiar logic has been able to foist upon the unwary a great many ideas and doctrines that are questionable, to say the least.

"Has the Era of the Church Age Come to an End?" begins with Camping's view of conditions in the church and in the world. He talks at length about apostasy in the churches, the population explosion, and technological advances. He goes on to suggest the importance of the near world wide reach of Family Radio, the organization of which he is president and general manager. God has placed Family Radio in a unique position, according to Camping, to reach the whole world with what he likes to call "the true gospel" for two reasons: 1. Because the church is dead and God must now use other means to save souls, and 2. Even if the church were a vibrant, healthy spiritual concern, there is no way (in his opinion) that all the Christians in all the world could ever reach all of the constantly increasing population. God has appointed Family Radio under the leadership of Camping's unique vision to fulfill the task of Matthew 28:19-20. He states as an absolutely confirmed fact, that "*we must realistically admit the churches of today cannot by any means fulfill Christ's command to go into all the world with the Gospel.*" The potential for arrogance in such a high self-view seems to completely escape him.

Camping correlates his perception of apostasy in the church and growing population with the convergence of modern technology, stating,

Thus we wonder: is there a correlation that exists between all of these major subjects we have been discussing? Let us review.

- 1. Tremendous apostasy in the congregations and denominations.*
- 2. Exploding population.*
- 3. Exploding electronic knowledge, resulting in enormous advances in mass communication.*
- 4. Increasing blessing coming to a ministry such as Family Radio as it ministers globally the true Gospel.*

Fact is, the Bible does provide a marvelous synthesis of these things. Once we understand the Bible's teaching on these subjects, we should understand how harmonious all of these phenomena are.

Ah, but how does Camping discover this synthesis he so boldly proclaims? Let us look at his biblical reasoning.

The Church is Dead

Camping begins right away with his main argument: The New Testament church has been abandoned by Christ. His argument consists not of biblical passages where God says any such thing, but by approaching the Bible through the focused lens of his own peculiar logic. He asks: “*Is the New Testament church invincible?*” Then he argues that when Jesus said, “I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” in Matthew 16:18, he was allowing room for his (Camping’s) doctrine. For example, he argues that while God did indeed establish and work through local organized churches (as seen in Revelation chapters 2 and 3), he never gave any guarantee of duration. In fact, according to his argument, because specific local assemblies mentioned in the New Testament have ceased to exist, there is proof positive that God planned that someday he would be done with all local churches. To justify his argument, he further makes a semantic distinction between what he calls the “spiritual church” and the corporate church. Indeed, the Bible does lend some credence to the concept, however Jesus himself taught the nature of it and how it would be dealt with.

The kingdom of God as taught by Jesus always contemplated the presence of evil among the righteous-right up until the harvest. Take the mustard seed in Matthew 13:31-32. This tiny seed grows into a great “tree” wherein the birds of the air make their nests. Birds of the air often represent evil spirits in parabolic scripture. (In the parable of the sower, Matthew 13:3-9, who is it that takes away the seed from the hard ground?) There will always be those whose motives and intentions are evil among the assembled believers. This is underscored by the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13:24-30. The farmer sows his wheat, but at night his enemy sows tares in the field. When the tares begin to spring up, the field workers want to know if they should pluck them up. The Master tells them to leave them, lest they pluck up or damage the wheat (v.29). The tares will be gathered up and burned with the chaff at the harvest (v.30). At no time does Jesus describe the kingdom of God as somehow overwhelmed or overtaken by evil. The harvest will be its own solution.

Facts have never stood in Camping’s way when arguing any position, however. He habitually uses partial truths to create whole fiction. He argues that Matthew 16:18 has, not the corporate church in view, but the “spiritual church.” True enough. He argues in the very next paragraph

Therefore, we can know that the corporate external church known as congregations and denominations have no assurance that they are safe from the wrath of God.

True again, no? Perhaps, but he offers no real proof of the concept. He concludes his rationale with a verse wrenched completely out of its context:

*As a matter of fact God declared in 1 Peter 4:17 “**judgment must begin at the house of God.**” (Emphasis in the original.)*

Wait. Let’s look at what Peter was saying before jumping to conclusions, shall we? Here is the verse in context:

1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad

also with exceeding joy. 14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. 16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. 17 **For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God:** and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? 18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? 19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Is Peter talking about God dismantling the church? Not at all! Camping simply conveniently borrows a few of Peter's words out of context to bolster his completely bogus idea.

There is one other idea connected with this that must be addressed. Camping assumes that the appearance and later disappearance of a local church or denomination at various times throughout history is due to the judgment of God against that group. Does the Bible back him up? No, it does not, and history itself lends no support to the idea. Never mind the wars of men that have moved whole nations about. Never mind the plagues of the middle ages that killed entire villages and towns. Never mind that famines, floods and other causes can make people move on. Never mind that people have migrated from nation to nation, continent to continent for many reasons, including to take their church with them where they went. However, not to be deterred by actual facts of history, Camping assumes that the appearance and disappearance of congregations and communions is because God held them in some disfavor. Never mind the facts, because we've made an assumption!

This assumption is merely the groundwork for his next argument, that Old Testament Israel is not merely an allegorical example for the church (although played out by real people in real history), but he perceives them as a fixed template for God's dealings with the New Testament church. (One might ask, why God would bother with a New Testament church at all, if he merely intended to duplicate Old Testament history in the end anyway?) Here is the gist of his idea:

. . . there is a larger plan of God that must be looked at.

This plan shows that a time will come when God will no longer use the churches and congregations to bring the Gospel to the world. They instead will come under the wrath of God.

To see this plan we must carefully examine Old Testament Israel. They, without any question, typify the New Testament church which the Bible speaks of as the Israel of God. (Gal. 6:16)

What Camping cannot discern is that Israel as a type of the church and Israel as a template to duplicate in the church are two completely different things. We shall return to this idea shortly.

There follows in "Has the Era of the Church Age Come to an End?" a discussion of the history of the patriarchs, the kingdom years and the final abandonment and destruction of national Israel. Rather than

seeing the spiritual lessons to be learned, he sees a history doomed to repeat itself in the church. This is very sad, but explains much about other things that Camping has taught over the years.

On the contrary, the “true Israel of God” spoken of by the apostle Paul in Romans and Galatians does not mean that Old Testament Israel is to be some kind of template stamp applied to the church. Indeed, what Paul is highlighting in these passages is the difference between attempting to fulfill the law through fleshly efforts and living in the knowledge of grace. Inward spirituality versus outward law-keeping. Camping would probably agree, insofar as we allow for the semantic distinction between the corporate and spiritual churches. However, he fails utterly to understand the work that Christ accomplished if he is applying Israel as a template rather than as a type or example.

High Places and Low

Camping turned onto this detour from truth a long time ago. Nearly four years ago he began hinting at what was to come by preaching the equivalency of the “high places” in Old Testament Israel with “ideas and doctrines” that may not be quite true to the Bible in New Testament churches. As far as analogies go, this is perfectly acceptable. One may say, “This is *like* that,” but what one may **not** say is, “This *is* that,” as Camping does. However, it is evident that he believes that Israel is not only an allegorical type but an absolute template. What happened to Israel **will** happen (or has happened) to the church, and therefore the churches of the New Testament era were predestined to have “high places” in them that would offend God and thus would lead him ultimately to abandon and then destroy them.

He further correlates the Babylonian destruction of Israel with the so-called “great tribulation” described in Matthew 24, teaching that it is not the whole world that is in view, but the New Testament church under God’s judgment. Somehow we are supposed to believe that what Jesus described is going to come upon the very church of which he proclaimed earlier (my paraphrase), “I will build my church and Satan will never be able to overcome it.” He relies once again on 1 Peter 4:17 to support his declaration even though it is clearly taken out of context and is purposely misinterpreted.

Heretical Blasphemy

Now we come to the heart of the matter. Having set up his straw man arguments, he knocks them down with one swift stroke. After vilifying the corporate church and predicting awful judgments from God to come upon her, he gleefully declares that “*The church age has come to an end.*”

Harold Camping has long been enamored with his own personal involvement in announcing and bringing to pass the end of the age. His own sense of self importance, which seems to have motivated much of his life’s work, has manifested as outright heresy and blasphemy in recent years. This has manifested itself in other relatively recent heretical outings such as the publication of his books, “1994?” and “Are You Ready?” in which he predicted the return of Christ for September 6, 1994. Needless to say; Jesus didn’t make an appearance then or since. Nevertheless, Camping has never recanted nor apologized for his error. He continues to be obsessed with biblical calendars, historical timelines and prophetic dates. He believes that he knows the exact age of the earth, the exact date of the birth of Christ, and although he has not made it public (no doubt out of fear of being lynched this time), he has recently told some people privately that he indeed does know when Jesus will return.

Does God Hate You?

Camping cannot see the love of God and grace toward the church because he is obsessed with God's final judgment. Over the years he has increasingly isolated himself from fellowship with the greater Christian church, setting himself in judgment over it and its members. He has a long, long history of leaving churches (often splitting them in the process), refusing to submit his doctrine and teaching to examination, and of setting himself apart from and above any authority. He has consistently placed himself in the position of uniquely interpreting the Word of God for his followers, increasingly distancing himself and them from the Body of Christ. And now he insists on killing that body while putting the blame on God. This took on literal proportions, when he recently guided the move to dissolve his church in Alameda, California, and regroup those who stayed around as a "fellowship." More than half the congregation left for other churches, some to start new ones.

Even a quick examination of his declarations regarding the death of the church reveals an ability to roam freely around the Bible (particularly in the Old Testament, since Israel is the foundation template for his doctrines) and jump from verse to (out of context) verse to justify his heresies. One must accept his view of the biblical calendar, of numerology, and of Christ's relationship to the church to even begin to understand where he gets his teaching. What gives him the ability to come up with many of these teachings is his peculiar view that the Bible is not only God's revealed word, but that it is also (and especially) a parable to be mined for deep secrets. Never mind that if the Bible is little more than a parable, it can be interpreted as one sees fit, disregarding grammar, context and history as well as any other bothersome facts. It is no surprise then, that he views himself, as do his close followers, as having superior spiritual insights. This is one of the distinguishing marks of cult (and occult) leadership.

Insult Upon Injury

In his Addendum I to "Has the Era of the Church Age Come to an End?" Harold Camping makes it very clear who and what he truly is. It is with great solemnity that I make this declaration: Harold Camping is an antichrist and a false prophet.

He desperately attempts to prove his teaching by taking more and more verses wildly out of context and completely misinterpreting them, sometimes turning their meanings inside out. He begins his Addendum as he often does his other studies, "*We have learned.*" What does Camping mean by this? He means that he has set up a series of straw man arguments and knocked them down. He has proved nothing, for he has taken verses out of context, misinterpreted them and twisted them to force meanings that God clearly never intended. He ignores the plain grammatical, contextual reading of God's Word and produces highly complicated and misleading answers to his own questions with complete disregard for truth.

"*But now the time has come,*" he says,

when the era of the church age has come to an end. The time has come for others to complete the task of world evangelization. And simultaneously with the end of the church age God has brought His judgment upon the churches. For more than 1900 years God has tolerated the wrong doctrines even as He tolerated the high places of Old Testament Israel. But now God has loosed Satan and through his

deceptions churches all over the world have become apostate, following the desires of men rather than those of God. Satan has been allowed to marshal his forces to surround Jerusalem and destroy it. We have learned that the terms Jerusalem and Judea refer to the corporate external church.

How have we learned this? Camping has told us himself, that's how. He has held forth mangled and twisted verses that no longer resemble the wonderful truths that God intended to give to his people. He has built an occult fortress of spurious doctrines that have been revealed only to him, declaring that anyone who disagrees with him has no spiritual sight. Those who dispute his "findings" in the Bible are doomed because they do not have God's enlightenment in their souls. (This, in spite of 2000 years of church history and orthodox interpretations of scripture that go back to Jesus and the apostles!)

He implies further that prophecies against national Israel have a direct one-for-one application to the church and its earthly destiny. Amos, who prophesied a famine in the land for Israel was really prophesying about a dearth of sound biblical preaching and teaching, so much so that the destruction predicted for national Israel would be duplicated spiritually in the corporate church(es) of our era. Again, Israel is a template in his doctrine, but with no foundation for the idea- it is assumed. But never mind. If God isn't finished with the church, Camping is determined to kill it anyway, just to prove a point.

It is not enough to merely destroy the outward church as he perceives it, but it is necessary to dismantle all things "church" from among Christians. Even the straightforward truthful preaching of the gospel, if it takes place in a church cannot save a soul, he declares:

"The terrible truth is that children born in that congregation may be under the hearing of good preaching. But if the Holy Spirit is not in the midst of that congregation they will not become saved. That family has a serious problem that can only be remedied by leaving the congregation."

The church is dead, he says, and therefore the Holy Spirit is not present, and therefore the preaching of the Word (even if it is all absolutely perfectly true!) is ineffectual, and therefore the only remedy is to flee the church. The functions of the church are in the hands of Satan. The spiritual offices of the church are in the control of Satan. The Word of God, if it is preached in these churches, is in the power of Satan. What rubbish! God says in Isaiah 55:11 "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it "

What is wrong with this picture that Camping paints? Look at what the Bible really says:

1 John 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 19 **They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.** 20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. 21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is a liar but he that

denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. 23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. 24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. 25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. 26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. 27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

Who leaves and divides the church? It is none other than antichrist. Who is under the rule of Satan? The church? Or the one calling for people to flee the church? Harold Camping has left the church and is calling others to follow him. The very fact that he has left the church and is taking his close followers with him tells us a great deal about his true nature and that of his teaching. He is not one of “us” as identified by the apostle John, and it is a proven fact that he is not of “us” because he has left “us.” Harold Camping cannot be a true believer in Jesus Christ. If he was, he would be seeking to build the church, not to destroy it.

Ordinances and Orders

Camping also declares that large portions of the New Testament no longer apply. Why? Because he says so, mainly, but more to his point, because God has turned his back on the very churches to whom the New Testament was written.

What is to be done about baptism? He has an answer:

Incidentally please note that circumcision in the Old Testament was a ceremonial law pointing to the need of having one's sins cut away. So, too, water baptism is a ceremonial law pointing to the need of having our sins washed away.

This can be answered simply, by asking where baptism is identified as a ceremonial law? Certainly, it is a command given by Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20. Ought not believers to be both baptized and those who baptize in obedience to Christ? His denial of baptism to believers is founded upon the completely spurious idea that the ordained offices of pastor, elder, deacon, etc., are equivalent to Old Testament priesthood and have, of course, perished with the corporate church. In the absence of these ordained “priests” no one may be baptized. In fact, he teaches, it is now a sin to be baptized.

There is absolutely no foundation for this concept anywhere in the Bible. Baptism was not a ministry conferred by laying on of hands, or by ordination. It was simply a command to believers as part of evangelization and preaching of the gospel. It is not a ceremony that “belongs” to any special order of men or ministers. It is a function that believers in Christ are to conduct as they go through the world preaching and teaching.

What of the Lord's Supper?

Likewise, the Passover, the burnt offerings, the blood sacrifices were all Old Testament ceremonial commands pointing to Jesus who was the lamb of God who

was sacrificed. Likewise the Lord's supper is a ceremonial law pointing to the death of Christ by which we receive eternal life, and pointing to the marriage feast of the bride and the lamb which signifies the completion of our salvation.

While he cannot directly answer 1 Corinthians 11:26, which clearly teaches that we demonstrate the Lord's death in taking the bread and the cup "till he come," Camping nevertheless denies the Lord's supper based on the absence of ordained ministers to administer the table. If the organized church is dead, the offices are no longer valid, and therefore no one is authorized to administer communion. Biblical evidence does not support this view.

Jesus himself instituted communion at the Passover just prior to his death on the cross for our sins. He gave it its meaning when he said "this is my body" and "this is my blood." He gave no other instructions than to say, "This do in remembrance of me." Likewise, when the apostle Paul was instructing the Corinthian assembly, he gave no order of service, no priestly instruction, no ordination of administration. He simply repeated the words of Christ, and added the "why" of the Lord's supper: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." The idea that the bread and cup are forbidden to true believers because no pastor or elder is authorized to administer them is not only unbiblical, but it denies the essential nature of communion, which is the unique invocation of the presence of Christ "where two or three are gathered in my name" (Matthew 18:20). There are, in fact, churches all over the world where if all the elders perished today, those churches would continue to celebrate the Lord's supper. It is what Christians do, not what pastors administer.

Baptism and communion have been essential celebrations of the church from the beginning. Camping nevertheless insists on wiping out these things from among Christians. One might wonder why he would be so insistent. However, the reasons become clear when his doctrinal system is put under the light of the Holy Scriptures.

Arrival At The Awful Conclusion

The very idea that Christ would ever abandon his church flies in the face of both biblical exegesis and the nature of God's grace. Harold Camping and those who believe his doctrines in their hearts are in grave spiritual danger. What he teaches is heresy. It is blasphemy that at the very least borders on blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. It is not much of a stretch to come to this conclusion.

I have always been taught that the particular sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit could no longer be committed. It was a special case sin, the teaching goes- one that was committed by the Pharisees in Jesus' time. Jesus himself named the sin and its consequence in Mark 3:28-30 (better yet, start reading at v.22). To say that Jesus Christ performed his miracles through demonic power is to not just insult the Son of Man, but it is to identify the Holy Spirit, the agent who does the "work," with Satan. It is unforgivable. The reason many believe the sin is no longer capable of being committed is that Jesus is no longer on earth performing miracles. Blasphemers are apparently off the hook because the object of their blasphemy is absent. But is this a valid argument? Indeed, not.

Since sin is spiritual in nature, just as holiness is spiritual in nature, physical presence of the object of the sin is not required. For example, take a couple of other sins that Jesus talked about. To have unjustified anger toward your brother is to murder him, spiritually speaking (Matthew 5:21-22). For a man to lust

after a woman in his heart is to already have committed adultery with her, spiritually speaking (Matthew 5:27-28). The object of the sin need not be physically present in order for the sin to be committed.

When Saul of Tarsus was struck to the ground on the Damascus road, the words he heard were not, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou my people?" but rather, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou **me**?" It is critical that we remember the nature of Christ's relationship with his people. Christ, Paul tells us, is the head of the body (Ephesians 4:15 and 5:23 and in 1 Corinthians 11:3), and the body, the church assembled for worship (as demonstrated in taking the bread and cup), experiences the presence of Christ in a unique way (Matthew 18:20). So, while Christ is not physically present, he really is present spiritually when we gather in his name

Harold Camping would have us believe that to gather in the name of Jesus and to take the Lord's supper is sin. This is tantamount to declaring that work of Christ through the Holy Spirit in the congregation is the work of Satan. It is to identify the Holy Spirit **as** Satan, and this is blasphemy, not only against Christ and the church, but against the person of the Holy Spirit. According to Jesus Christ himself, this sin is unforgivable. No amount of semantic gymnastics regarding the "spiritual" church versus the corporate church can negate what Jesus said: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I (through the Holy Spirit) in the midst of them." This could not be any more true than at those times when the church gathers around the Lord's table.

For many years, Harold Camping has pronounced severe judgment almost nightly on his Open Forum radio program, threatening and bludgeoning people again and again with Revelation 22:18-19:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

But now the judgment comes full circle, for Harold Camping has both added to and taken away from God's Holy Word with these heretical doctrines. There are many problems in Camping's teachings, but this present blasphemy clearly takes him out of the realm of historical orthodox Christian belief and places him squarely in the category of blasphemous liar. What he teaches leaves its hearers in danger of their eternal souls.

Each one of us must do as Peter exhorted the church: ". . . make your election and calling sure." (2 Peter 1:10) Don't be deceived by "another gospel" than that which was originally (and plainly) delivered once and for all in the Holy Bible. As the apostle John wrote in 1 John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

We now know for certain who one of those false prophets is.