

WHY DO CERTAIN PEOPLE FOLLOW FALSE PROPHETS LIKE HAROLD CAMPING?

TEXT: DEUTERONOMY 18:20-22

Introduction:

1. Our text is very plain, and easy to understand. The Bible gives us a test for recognizing false prophets. "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deut. 18:22).
2. In the Old Testament, false prophets were put to death (Deut. 18:20).
3. Today, of course, we are not under the Mosaic Law. And the USA is not a theocracy like Israel.
4. Therefore, Harold Camping and Pat Robertson and Benny Hinn and all of the other false prophets do not have to worry about getting the death penalty.
5. If all the false prophets in America were executed, there would literally be executions all day every day of the week nonstop.
6. And we do not have the time tonight to look at all of the false prophecies made by false prophets.
7. For example, in 1920, the Jehovah's Witnesses published a booklet entitled, *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*, and in this booklet they said, "We may expect 1925 to witness the return of these faithful men of Israel from the condition of death, being resurrected... Therefore we may confidently expect that 1925 will mark the return of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the faithful prophets of old."
8. Of course, this did not happen.
9. They made several similar false prophecies regarding the battle of Armageddon, the second coming of Christ, the end of the world, etc.
10. Their most recent false prophecy was their prediction that the end of the world would end in 1975. They lost many members when that prophecy was proven false.
11. In 1988, Pat Robertson claimed that God told him to run for president. He did not win the Republican primary. (Thank God!)
12. In his 1991 book *The New World Order*, Robertson predicted that U.S. Senator Jay Rockefeller would be elected president in 1996.
13. In 1998, Robertson said that the city of Orlando would be struck by "earthquakes, tornadoes and possibly a meteor" (as punishment for promoting Disney World's "Gay Days").

14. In January of 2009, Pat Robertson predicted a terrorist attack on the US causing death and destruction equivalent to that of a nuclear war sometime before the end of the year.
15. Benny Hinn has told so many outrageous stories, it is unbelievable he has so many gullible followers. Here is one of his strangest prophecies: "I believe, that Jesus, God's Son, is about to appear physically, in meetings and to believers around the world, to wake us up! He appeared after His resurrection and He is about to appear before His second coming! You know a prophetess sent me a word through my wife, right here, and she said 'Tell your husband that Jesus is going to physically appear in his meetings.' I am expecting to see, I am telling you that - I feel it's going to happen" (TBN Praise-a-thon, April 2, 2000).
16. There are certain individuals who would not get taken in by con artists like Robertson and Hinn, but yet they fall for Harold Camping.
17. The devil has a big tool box, and he has different tools for different people.
18. The apostle Paul said, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (II Cor. 2:11). The idea behind the Greek word translated "devices" is "thoughts." Satan gets into people's minds by wrong teaching.
19. Harold Camping predicted that the Rapture would occur in September 1994. When he was proven false that should have been enough for all to see that he is a false prophet.
20. But Camping says that he simply miscalculated back in 1994, and his foolish followers accept his explanation.
21. Now he claims he is absolutely certain that he has the right calculation. He has continued with his false teachings, and strange numerology, and date-setting, declaring that the church age is now over, and that "Judgment Day" would be May 21, 2011 (yesterday).
22. Romans 16:17 says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."
23. Regrettably, many confused and unstable Christians support the ministry of false teachers like Harold Camping.
24. My message this evening is entitled, "Why Do Certain People Follow False Prophets Like Harold Camping?"

I. FALSE TEACHERS ATTRACT REBELLIOUS PEOPLE

1. I once heard J. Vernon McGee say something startling on the radio, but I think he had a point. He said, "The cults are God's garbage men."
2. In his book, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Walter Martin has a chapter entitled, "The Psychological Structure of Cultism."
3. In this very interesting chapter, Walter Martin says, "There is no doubt in my mind that the belief systems of the cults share much in common, and that some of these common factors are worth noting. First and foremost, the belief systems of the cults are characterized by closed-mindedness."
4. In other words, followers of Harold Camping are closed-minded, rebellious, and stubborn. You cannot reason with them because they are unreasonable and unteachable.
5. Dr. Martin goes on to say, "They are not interested in a rational cognitive evaluation of the facts."
6. Now let us consider Mr. Camping. Deuteronomy 18:22 says, "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."
7. So if you mention to a Camping follower that Mr. Camping was wrong with his 1994 prediction, he or she will ignore the facts and go on about how wonderful Mr. Camping is.
8. If you point out that the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 24:36, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only," they will shrug it off and say that God is now giving new revelations to His true believers.
9. Dr. Martin said, "Secondly, cultic belief systems are characterized by genuine antagonism on a personal level since the cultist almost always identifies his dislike of the Christian message with the messenger who holds such opposing beliefs. The identification of opposing beliefs with the individual in the framework of antagonism leads the cultist almost always to reject the individual as well as the belief, a problem closely linked with closedmindedness and one that is extremely difficult to deal with in general dialogue with cultists."
10. I have observed this to be true. Camping followers can be very hostile and antagonistic when a Christian points out their error.
11. And so are JW's! I remember years ago when a member of our church noted the similarities between Mr. Camping and the Jehovah's Witnesses.

12. So I was interested when I saw this article on the Internet, "Harold Camping's Kingdom Hall" by Jason Wallace.

Pastor Wallace writes:

Like the Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses, he focused on the "hidden" meanings of texts, seeing pointers toward 1994 in the number of swine drowned in the Sea of Galilee and in the number of servants in Abraham's house. Camping introduced *1994?* with the following statement: "No book ever written is as audacious or bold as one that claims to predict the timing of the end of the world, and that is precisely what this book presumes to do." No matter how audacious or bold, it was wrong. September 6, 1994, came and went. Camping seemed to back away from his false prophecy, but he has now decided that he was right all along...Like Russell, he is now telling Christians to leave their churches. All the churches are apostate. You should no longer trust your pastors and elders. You should abandon them and turn to the true channel of God's Word, Family Radio. Like Jehovah's Witnesses, you should simply fellowship together and await word from Oakland... Like the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mr. Camping accuses anyone who disagrees with him of not really believing the Bible...Will Christians read the Bible for themselves and search the Scriptures to know if these things are true, or will they blindly follow Mr. Camping into yet another false prophecy? And what will be the result for them if they do?

II. FOLLOWERS OF FALSE TEACHERS DO NOT KNOW THE BIBLE

1. Robert Fitzpatrick, the man who donated his \$140,000 life savings to pay for Camping's advertising, said, "It's either one or the other - either God is bringing you up, or you're going to die in the earthquake" (*NY Daily News*, May 21, 2011).
2. But the Bible does not teach that. Nor does it teach the so-called "end of the world" will be six months after the rapture.
3. Mr. Fitzpatrick also said, "The Bible says it's the mightiest earthquake there's ever been. It will pretty much destroy all structures."
4. In His Olivet Discourse, our Lord said "earthquakes in divers places" was one of the signs of His second coming (Matt. 24:7). Camping and his deluded followers use Revelation 16:18 to explain their earthquake prophecy.
5. "And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great."
6. This prophecy has nothing to do with the rapture.

7. Camping has stated that an earthquake will shake New Zealand that will "make Japan's earthquake look like a Sunday school picnic in comparison."
8. People who believe this nonsense have been severely brainwashed. They are being controlled and manipulated by Camping.
9. Horace Greeley (1811-1872) was the founding editor of the *New York Tribune*. He said, "It is impossible to mentally or socially enslave a Bible-reading people."
10. False teachers and religious cults prey on people who do not understand the Bible. People who are ignorant of the Bible are easily swept into cults and false religions.
11. One of the reasons Camping's followers are ignorant of the Bible is his allegorical method of interpretation. Those who follow this method will never properly understand the Bible.
12. Camping recently 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."
13. Did you catch that? "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."
14. In other words, nothing in the Bible can compare with Camping's bold new prophecies (cf. Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Rev. 22:18).
15. Ironically, Mr. Camping himself used to quote these Scriptures to explain his opposition to Pentecostalism. Now he is guilty of the very same thing.

III. CAMPING'S FOLLOWERS ARE CONFUSED OVER BIBLE PROPHECY

1. I was thinking of making this my first and major point, but have kept it for last because it is obvious that this is what has been driving Camping and his followers since his *1994* book (published in 1992).

2. The Seventh-Day Adventist cult and the Jehovah's Witness cult, and many other cults began to grow and spread after their founders made fantastical prophecies regarding the end of the world.
3. Bible prophecy is an important subject. Most of the book of Revelation deals with Bible prophecy. In addition there are also many important prophecies in the Major Prophets, Minor Prophets, Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24 & 25; Mark 13; Luke 21), II Thessalonians 2, and other books of the Bible.
4. Certain facts are clear:
 - No one in this world knows when our Lord will return. Jesus said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:36).
 - The Lord Jesus Christ is definitely coming back; we just do not know when. He said in John 14:1-3, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."
 - The rapture is imminent. Date setting is wrong. Our Lord said to His disciples, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:7, 8).
 - We are not to be overly concerned about the day of His return. We are to be witnesses for Him. But Camping and his Family Radio organization are terrible witnesses. They are causing confusion and bringing contempt and ridicule upon Christianity, upon the Bible, upon preachers, etc.
 - I read that they have put up more than 1,200 billboards across the nation, as well 2,000 billboards in other nations. What a waste of God's money!

CONCLUSION:

1. Harold Camping's foolishness has given the world another opportunity to mock Christians, mock the Bible, mock preachers, etc.

2. Worldlings are having big "end of the world parties," etc.
3. Yesterday's front page of the *NY Daily News* said:
"Some say the world will end today so...BUY THIS PAPER!...If it's the last thing you do!"
4. Even Mayor Bloomberg got in on the merriment, mocking Camping's predictions on his radio broadcast on Friday, making jokes about the end of the world.