

Atheists Call for Fraud Probe Into Family Radio's Domsday Deceit

Mon, May. 30, 2011 Posted: 09:50 PM EDT

While there has been no shortage of jokes surrounding Harold Camping's rapture prediction, at least one group is calling for a serious investigation for fraud.

"Now that we're seeing ... one suicide, we see attempted murder, suicide ... I'm taking about the aftermath of Harold Camping's shenanigans, people who are now destitute; ... we are seeing problems and we're simply asking for accountability," said Bob Seidensticker of Seattle Atheists, on Sunday.

Though a call for an investigation into Family Radio, which Camping is president of, by atheists may come as no surprise, Christians have not downplayed the seriousness of the issue either.

"Stories of fallout after Camping's failed prophecies are very sad. False doctrine more serious than some think," Jerry Vines, a Baptist pastor for over 50 years, tweeted earlier.

Camping had predicted that May 21 would be the day true believers are raptured to heaven while the rest of the world suffers the beginning of Judgment Day – which would include unimaginable earthquakes. The date passed with no rapture and no apocalyptic type of events.

But some of those who believed Camping's "guaranteed" forecast were left with an empty bank account and no employment as they had expected to be taken up to heaven. Suicides were also recorded in Russia and California ahead of May 21.

When made aware of the altered lives of many of his followers, Camping refused to accept responsibility for anyone's life. And even after the rapture dud, he continues to set a date for the end times. October 21 will be the day the rapture and the end of the world happen, he now says.

The group Seattle Atheists wants to know whether Family Radio, based in Oakland, Calif., benefited from the Judgment Day campaign. While soliciting donations, Family Radio spent millions of dollars on advertisements around the country to get the word out about May 21.

"How much of their income has been due to this false rapture campaign?" Seattle Atheists asks.

The organization says current laws do not make it possible to find out such facts as the total amount of contributions received by a religious organization and how the money was spent. It is thus calling on Congress to implement new rules so that all nonprofits, including religious groups, are required to open their books to the public and show how they've been spending their money.

The radio network's financial documents have been made public and show that it received \$80 million in contributions between 2005 and 2009. But it is still unknown how much money went into the doomsday ad campaigns. Camping said he didn't know the cost of the campaigns and saw no need to refund contributions, insisting that the money was given to spread the Gospel. A longtime employee with Family Radio, Matt Tuter, who serves as international projects manager, estimated that around \$100 million was spent on the campaigns and said most of the money came from the sale of property. The Christian Post could not confirm that.

Nevertheless, Seidensticker maintained, "There must be consequences. For this radio network to be financially healthy when they have caused many of their listeners to be destitute or distraught – that's wrong. We want a way for those injured by this prediction to come forward so they can be compensated by Family Radio."

While some have protested the atheist group's call for an investigation as infringing on First Amendment rights, Sam Mulvey of Seattle Atheists pushed back, "There are some limitations on speech.

"You can't incite to riot, you can't shout fire in the crowded theater. How what Harold Camping is doing isn't equated to shouting fire in a crowded theater is beyond me. He incited thousands of people to spend everything they got and ruin their entire lives."

Seidensticker added, "This guy's song and dance has just gone on for long enough."

Camping has made numerous predictions about the rapture and the end of the world over the past few decades. Other than May 21, he has also predicted that the rapture would occur in 1994, among other dates.

Audrey Barrick

Christian Post Reporter

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Harold Camping Tosses Out Evangelism, Focuses Only on the 'Saved'

Sun, May. 29, 2011 Posted: 07:03 PM EDT

Harold Camping is tossing the witnessing tracts and no longer focusing on bringing people to Jesus Christ. His main task now, he said, is to nurture those already saved.

For others, he suggested, it's already too late.

During his radio program "Open Forum" on Thursday, the Family Radio president received a call from a faithful listener who said she was disappointed and confused following the May 21 rapture dud.

Camping had predicted that the rapture and Judgment Day would begin on May 21. When that didn't happen, he offered a new interpretation and said a spiritual judgment came upon the world that day, not a physical one.

The caller complained that though Camping declared that the work of salvation came to a close on May 21 and that no one can come to Christ anymore, Family Radio was sending out mixed signals with some announcers still preaching about salvation.

The 89-year-old Christian broadcaster responded, saying that they are "gradually beginning to check out our programs" and that they have shifted from Judgment Day to "feed my sheep."

"Our job right now is to feed the sheep," Camping said. "Millions have become saved and many of them ... they've just become saved and they know very little about the word of God. And now we have a tremendous task to nurture them."

The caller mentioned that she had passed out tracts and witnessed to people ahead of May 21. Hoping to get some direction on what to do now, she asked, "If we think we're true believers, we should not be witnessing then to anybody else? We should just focus on nurturing ourselves?"

"Well, really, yes, our task of witnessing to the world has really changed," Camping replied.

"This is so stupendous, so tremendous in our thinking because all our life we have been concerned about witnessing to people that they might become saved."

While he said Family Radio is cautiously taking its next steps, or "backing into this very gently," as he stated, he said the organization will no longer be offering witnessing tracts and instead play more music and cater to the believers.

As to who those true believers are, Camping said he didn't know and that no one can know.

"Someone might be a true believer and still be praying for his salvation and yet God had already saved them," he said. "We don't have to start making judgments. We can't look in the heart of anyone. We just want to share the Bible and particularly focus on passages that help grow in grace and to feed my sheep."

Several callers on Thursday didn't let the doomsday preacher off easy for his failed rapture prediction and for continuing to put a date on the end times – he now proclaims that the rapture and the end of the world will take place on Oct. 21.

They had Camping read Scripture passages such as Acts 1:7, Ezekiel 13:1-3, Deuteronomy 18:20-21, and Jeremiah 14:14, all of which have to do with false prophets.

"To your audience, I must tell you that they either believe the Son of God and his words or your false proclamations," one caller said. "You're in great error."

Another caller asked, when we declare May 21 as a certain day and things have not come to pass as we have said they would, "are we not considered a false prophet?"

Camping offered one excuse, though he didn't refer to himself.

"Some preachers are really trying hard to be faithful to the word of God. So they've studied ... and they came to a wrong conclusion because their study was not quite as complete as it should have been," he said.

Then the longtime broadcaster went on to talk about the cross and how God opens the spiritual eyes of people in His timing.

"In our day God has opened our eyes ... that God has shed his blood before the foundation of the world ... Now, for 2,000 years almost God has not opened the eyes of anyone to the fact that when Christ came to go to the cross, he was not paying for sin

there, he was demonstrating how he made payment for sin.

"The reason that nobody stumbled on to the fact that that was a demonstration, not the actual payment for sin is because God had not opened up anybody's spiritual eyes to this."

Applying this to his failed rapture prediction, Camping submitted that God didn't open their eyes to "the fact" that Judgment Day would begin spiritually on May 21.

And there was a reason for that, he said. If they had known it would be a spiritual judgment and advertised it that way to the world, then no one would have taken notice or feared God. But because they declared that a physical Judgment Day would come, the world took note of it, Camping said.

He acknowledged biblical passages that state no one knows the day or the hour of the last days. But, notably, Camping insisted that God had kept that hidden until today.

"All kinds of people made predictions. They've always been wrong," he said. "But we have to remember there's more to the Bible than just Acts 1:7 ... He has not declared it until our day."

"So we have to listen to the whole Bible and then we know there would come a time when we would know the day or the hour and God has revealed that to us."

So how can you tell who's a false prophet?

If what the person claims is not from the Bible, that is a false prophet, said Camping.

Though Camping maintains that what he teaches is solely from the Bible, many Christian leaders have labeled Camping a false prophet and have called his teachings dangerous.

While one caller on Thursday's program suggested that Camping truly make his program an "open forum" by having other preachers come on and teach Scripture, Camping rejected that suggestion.

Audrey Barrick
Christian Post Reporter

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Harold Camping Bashed as False Prophet on Family Radio Airwaves

Tue, May. 31, 2011 Posted: 11:26 PM EDT

Harold Camping, whose been allowed to keep his Open Forum slot on Family Radio despite his false prediction, was confronted Tuesday by a former follower who pressed the radio preacher to admit that he was a false prophet.

An unidentified caller rang into Oakland, Calif.-based Family Radio's "Open Forum" program and shared that he had spent thousands of dollars on billboards, mail-outs, and tracts to warn about the May 21 Rapture, as predicted by Camping.

"I'm not mad at you, or I don't blame you. I did it of my own free will and it's not your fault. I'm not calling to complain about that," clarified the self-described "May 21ster."

"But I will say that me, you, all May 21sters are false prophets because we said that the Rapture would occur on that day and it didn't. So I can't understand why you are still on the radio talking about all this stuff because at this point nobody can believe anything you or I say," said the caller, who was interrupted by Camping at that point.

Camping is president and co-founder of Family Radio, a Christian radio network with some 66 stations in the United States. He had wrongly predicted that the Rapture and worldwide earthquakes would take place on May 21 at 6 p.m. local time. When his prediction failed to take place, he came out and claimed that Judgment Day did come on May 21 – it just came spiritually instead of physically. Then he set a new date for the Rapture and the End of the World, Oct. 21, 2011.

Previously, the radio broadcaster and self-taught Bible teacher said the Rapture would occur on May 21 and the world would be completely destroyed on Oct. 21.

People who believed in Camping have lost their entire life's savings, some quit their jobs, and in a few extreme cases – there were several people who attempted suicide before or after the May 21 date because of his prediction.

Just like in his first post-May 21 press conference on May 23, Camping refuted Tuesday accusations that he was teaching false Bible messages.

Camping after cutting the caller off, pointed listeners to Deuteronomy 18:20 for the definition of what a false prophet is, saying that a false prophet is someone who presumes what he has been teaching came from God when it did not.

He also asserted that it was God's good plan that Judgment Day came spiritually on May 21 rather than physically. Had followers put on billboards that Judgment Day would come spiritually, no one would listen to their warning. But because they said Judgment Day would come physically, people all over the world took notice of the message.

"The net result is the whole world has become frightened and heard the word of God ... and Judgment Day is right from the word of God," said Camping. "And many people, we don't know who they are or where they are, are now praying and crying out for mercy as they listen carefully to that warning. And many of them have become saved."

It's notable that in the "Open Forum" program last Thursday, Camping suggested that since the spiritual Judgment Day already came on May 21, it may be too late for people to be saved after that date. He told followers that their focus should be "to feed the sheep" rather than handing out tracts and evangelizing at this point.

After quietly listening to Camping's explanation, the caller again pushed the point of them being false prophets.

"I told people the Rapture was going to happen. The Rapture did not happen. To me, that is a major, major, major false prophet," insisted the caller.

Camping shot back, "That is by your definition. That is by *your* definition. That is our problem, a lot of times we come along with definitions and ideas that are out of our own minds but God has given us the Bible as the truth. If your definition of a false prophet is correct, there would not be a pastor in the world, not one in the whole world, or a Bible teacher, who we could say is not a false prophet because nobody understands everything that God has put in the Bible."

The persistent caller, however, kept arguing with Camping over the definition of a false prophet.

Camping ended that call by saying, "Alright. OK. Well then if you want to be happy with that you are a false prophet and that everybody else in the whole world is a false prophet, well then be that. But that is not based on what the Bible is teaching."

Camping, 89, has made two previously wrong end of the world predictions besides the one on May 21, 2011, one in 1988 and

the other in 1994.

Ethan Cole
Christian Post Reporter

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Harold Camping: Dead Bodies Will Surface from Graves on Oct. 21 Doomsday

Tue, May 31, 2011 Posted: 12:00 AM EDT

While President Obama and the rest of the nation spent Memorial Day paying tribute to American veterans, doomsday preacher Harold Camping predicted Monday that corpses of the "unsaved," which includes those in the U.S. armed services, will be flung out of their graves and on the ground like "manure" on October 21.

Camping's comments during the Open Forum program on Family Radio Monday comes one week after he publicly recanted his predicted date of Rapture, changing it from May 21 to October 21.

He has persistently maintained that his dates for a May 21 Judgment Day and a October 21 Doomsday are accurate. The only adjustment in his forecast, according to Camping, is that the judgment on May 21 came in a "spiritual" sense rather than a physical one marked by disasters like earthquakes.

Judgment Day on May 21 did come, asserted Camping. However, he clarified that the Judgment Day arrived in a spiritual sense rather than manifesting in a physical Rapture.

On Monday, a caller asked Camping whether they would see any signs from Deuteronomy 28, beginning with verse 15, fulfilled in the coming End Days. The passage refers to the curse of God for those who disobey his teachings.

"Those who are unsaved are going to experience the curse of God," affirmed Camping, president of Family Radio.

He predicted that whatever of a person's corpse is left in the grave on October 21 "will be thrown out of the grave" and be "like manure on the ground." Furthermore, those who die on October 21 won't receive a burial, said Camping.

"They will be shamed in the eyes of God," he said.

Harold Camping then turned his attention to Memorial Day to further illustrate the gravity of his prediction.

"One of the things that you'll notice at this time of year. We're talking about May 30 and we consider all the graves and all those who have died in connection with the armed services of the United States and there is great respect, great respect for them," he said.

It is very proper for a person to be buried when he dies, acknowledged Camping, but on October 21 those who are "unsaved" will not remain that way.

"On the last day, all the unsaved are going to come under the curse of God. They are going to be thrown out of the grave if there are still a corpse there or bones. If they are in the grave, they will be shamed in the eyes of God. If they die on that day, they're not going to be buried. They're going to be shamed in the eyes of God," Camping predicted.

The radio broadcaster went on to explain that the person himself will never experience any of this since they are dead and no longer have any consciousness.

"But they will be shamed," he reiterated.

Elena Garcia
Christian Post Reporter

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Fearful Teen Commits Suicide Due to Harold Camping's Judgment Day Prediction

Thu, May 26, 2011 Posted: 12:00 PM EDT

A 14-year-old girl from Russia was so scared of the May 21 doomsday and rapture prediction made by Harold Camping that she committed suicide the same day, investigators said Wednesday. The teenager wanted to choose death rather than be among the ones suffering on earth after the rapture.

May 21 was the day that Family Radio preacher Camping said believers would rapture up to heaven ahead of the apocalypse and those left behind on earth would suffer under disasters that would culminate with the destruction of the world on October 21.

Nastya Zachinova, who lived in the Republic of Mari El in Central Russia, believed that the world end on May 21, her family told LifeNews, a Russian tabloid.

"She took this date too close to heart," the teen's mother, Lyudmila, told LifeNews.

Russia's state-owned news agency, RIA Novosti, reported Wednesday that the girl hanged herself out of fear of Camping's prediction.

Investigator Alexander Kosharin said the girl's behavior changed dramatically when she learned about the radio preacher's predictions, according to RIA Novosti.

Camping had claimed that earthquakes and the rapture would occur on May 21 at 6 p.m. local time and signal the beginning of the End.

The girl's personal diary entries revealed how terrified she was of the suffering that was to take place. She believed that she was not one of the "righteous" people that would be taken up to heaven but someone who would remain on earth and suffer.

"Whales are trying to beach themselves and birds are dying – it is just the beginning of the end," Zachinova wrote in her last diary entry, as reported by RIA Novosti.

"We are not righteous people, only they will go to heaven, the others will stay here on Earth to go through terrible sufferings," she wrote.

"I don't want to die like the others. That's why I'll die now."

The Russian news agency also reported that investigators are looking to see whether the girl had ties to "informal youth groups" or religious sects.

On Monday, Camping addressed his failed May 21 prediction, saying he was mistaken that the judgment would come physically but asserted that he was still correct in predicting the judgment because it did come "spiritually." He justified his new interpretation by saying that God is a loving God who wouldn't let people suffer on earth for five months. Moreover, no one would be able to survive the apocalyptic events for more than a few days, he added.

After his statement, a reporter informed Camping of news that a mother had attempted to kill herself and two children because she believed in his teaching of the May 21 doomsday.

When Camping heard that the mother did not succeed, he said he felt relieved.

"Murdering is terrible. It's contrary to everything the Bible teaches," said the 89-year-old radio broadcaster. "That would have been a horrible thing if she had done that. That would fill me with sorrow if she would do that. The Bible teaches that we are to save life, not kill."

"I'll tell you. What you just told me is a great relief to me because I would be sick at heart if someone had done such a stupid thing."

When pressed by a reporter on whether he would accept "responsibility for that," Camping answered no.

"I don't have any responsibility. I can't take responsibility for anybody's life. I'm only teaching the Bible," he shot back.

Elena Garcia
Christian Post Reporter

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Harold Camping Breaks Silence, Predicts October 21 Doomsday

Mon, May. 23, 2011 Posted: 09:50 PM EDT

An unapologetic Harold Camping made a new prediction Monday: the rapture is actually on Oct. 21, not May 21 as he originally proclaimed.

Camping offered no sincere apology when he spoke publicly Monday for the first time since his failed May 21 Judgment Day prediction. He insisted that his predictions have been right all along, only that his interpretation was more literal when it should have been spiritual.

Judgment Day on May 21 did come, said Camping. However, he clarified that the Judgment Day arrived in a spiritual sense rather than manifesting physically.

"On May 21, this last weekend, this is where the spiritual aspect of it really comes through. God again brought judgment on the world. We didn't see any difference but God brought Judgment Day to bear upon the whole world. The whole world is under Judgment Day and it will continue right up until Oct. 21, 2011 and by that time the whole world will be destroyed," he proclaimed.

The president of Family Radio said he agreed to speak because many people have been asking and that he had to "honorably" face that.

"Are you ready to shoot yourself or go on booze trip or whatever?" Camping said of people's questions to him.

"I can tell you very candidly that when May 21 came and went, it was a very difficult time for me, a very difficult time. I was wondering, 'What is going on?'" he said, speaking from the organization's headquarters in Oakland, Calif.

The 89-year-old radio broadcaster said he prayed and reviewed the Bible and concluded that he had been looking at the Bible more factually than spiritually.

"The Bible is a very spiritual book. There are a lot of things that are very factual, very factual, of course, but there are a lot of things that are very spiritual. How to know whether to look at it with a spiritual understanding or a factual understanding is hard to know," said Camping.

"The fact is when we look at it more spiritually then we find that He did come."

Camping then firmly stated that Oct. 21, 2011, is still the date of the End of the World.

On May 21, "God brought Judgment Day to the whole world. The whole world is on Judgment Day. It will continue to Oct. 21, 2011 and at that time the whole world will be destroyed."

It was Camping's first official statement to be released post-May 21.

His comments Monday were broadcast live, beginning 8:30 p.m. ET during the Family Radio's "Open Forum" program, by radio through the organization's FM stations and by television on KFTL Channel 28. Members of the press were allowed to sit inside the Family Radio office and listen as Camping delivered his statement.

During his statement and in the Q&A session with reporters that followed, the soothsayer strongly defended the accuracy of all his previous Judgment Day predictions.

He broke down each of his predictions, saying they were all fulfilled: May 21, 1988, judgment came upon the churches; Sept. 7, 1994, judgment continued on the churches; then on May 21, 2011, judgment came upon the entire world.

"We are not changing the dates at all. We are just looking at it a little more spiritually but it won't be spiritual on Oct. 21 because the Bible teaches the world will be destroyed altogether. But it will be very quick," said Camping.

Camping remained undeterred in his beliefs while speaking to reporters. He admitted that he was "wrong" in his interpretation of the spiritual aspect of May 21 but refused to accept fault for the timeline of his doomsday predictions.

"We have not made a mistake as so far as the timeline, the unfolding," he said.

Camping's latest predictions had resulted in chaos among his followers and others who believed him. Some quit their jobs, others sold all their possessions before the rapture date, and one mother tried to kill her two children.

Despite being asked several times whether he would take responsibility for the incidents that transpired, Camping deflected every time, saying he was just a "humble Bible teacher" who was merely relaying the message found in the Bible.

"I don't have any responsibility. I don't have any responsibility of anybody's life. I'm only teaching the Bible. I'm simply saying, 'This is what the Bible says.'"

Camping also took no responsibility for those who gave up everything based on his predictions.

"We at Family Radio never tell anyone what [to] do with their possessions. That's totally between them and God," he said.

But before Oct. 21, Camping said he will not sell any of his possessions, pointing out that he still needed a place to live and bills to pay until five months from now.

"Whenever Christ comes, whatever I have left, I will just leave it behind," he said. "Until then, I still need to live."

Camping did offer a half-hearted apology, only after being pressed by a reporter.

"If people want me to apologize then I can apologize, yes. I did not have all of that worked out as I wished I had it. But it doesn't bother me at all because I'm not a genius. When I make an error, I say, 'Yes, I was wrong.' I said that already," said the Family Radio president.

Camping said Family Radio, which is listener supported, is still collecting donations and that the organization "can get way more mileage out of a dollar than you ever could for yourself."

He said Family Radio has no intention of returning the money to donors.

"No, that money is still going out. We're still in business. We still have another five months," said Camping.

"Why would we return it? It's been given to get the Gospel out. We're spending it as wisely as possible."

He stressed that he has not received any salary and that they're not trying to garner anything for themselves. There is no greed at Family Radio, he stated.

"We're spending it as wisely as possible and maybe by Oct. 21 we'll only have \$10 left."

Speaking on the kind of person that will be raptured and ascend to heaven, Camping commented that being a Christian plays no role in salvation.

"It has nothing to do with religion," he said, noting Hindus and those of other faiths can be raptured. "If God has saved them then they're going to be caught up."

Citing the biblical passage stating "the last shall be first and the first shall be last," Camping said salvation belongs to those whom God has chosen and those who ask mercy from God.

"The last are those who know the least about the Bible. If God has decided to save them ... they don't have to know all about the Bible ... They just have to know God has spoken."

Prior to Monday's address, Camping had refused to grant any interviews to respond to his failed prediction. To the few media outlets that managed to reach him, Camping said very few words and indicated he needed time to think before responding.

On Sunday, he told the San Francisco Chronicle that he was "flabbergasted" the Rapture didn't happen. Speaking to International Business Times, which caught him at his Alameda home, Camping called the fallout over the May 21 date a "big, big deal" and something he had to "live with."

Leading up to his Judgment Day date, Camping had boldly predicted that the Rapture would occur at 6 p.m. at May 21, 2011 and that the world would be destroyed five months later on Oct. 21, 2011.

A regular speaker on Family Radio programs, Camping claimed that he had decoded numbers in the Bible to predict the End of Days. Based on his calculations, he concluded that the Rapture would take place 722,500 days after Jesus was crucified on Golgotha.

The co-founder of the Christian radio network with 66 stations across the country also predicted that on May 21 there would be earthquakes around the world and that approximately three percent of the world's population would be raptured while the rest of the world would endure the tribulation until Oct. 21, when the whole world would be destroyed.

Katherine T. Phan
Christian Post Reporter

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