

Harold Camping

Harold Camping	
Born	July 19, 1921Boulder, Colorado, United States
Occupation	Talk radio personality, self-published Christian author, civil engineer
Years active	1958–present
Known for	End times predictions
Religion	Christian
Spouse	Shirley Camping (1943–present) ^[1]
Website	
familyradio.com ^[2]	

Harold Egbert Camping (born July 19, 1921) is an American Christian radio broadcaster.^[3] He is president of Family Radio, a California-based radio station group that spans more than 150 markets in the United States. Camping is notable for applying numerology to his interpretations of Bible passages to predict dates for the End Times.^{[4] [5]}

His 2011 end times prediction was that on May 21, 2011 Jesus would return, the righteous would fly up to heaven, and that there would follow five months of fire, brimstone and plagues, with millions of people dying each day, culminating on Oct. 21, 2011 with the end of the world.^{[6] [7]} He had previously predicted judgment days on May 21, 1988, and September 7, 1994.^{[8] [9]}

His 2011 prediction was widely reported, and prompted responses from both atheist and Christian organizations.^[10] ^[11] After May 21 passed without the predicted incidents, Camping said he believed that a "spiritual" judgment had occurred on that date, and that the physical Rapture would occur on October 21, 2011, simultaneously with the destruction of the universe by God.^[12]

On June 9, 2011, Camping suffered a stroke and was hospitalized.^[13] On June 23, Camping’s Family Radio station announced that it would replace his show, *Open Forum*, with new programming.^[14]

Biography

Camping was born in Colorado and moved at an early age to California. He earned a B.S. degree in Civil Engineering from the University of California, Berkeley (1942).^[3] He and his family were members of the Christian Reformed Church until 1988. During this time he served as an elder and Sunday school teacher at the Alameda Bible Fellowship.

In 1958, Camping joined with other individuals of Christian Reformed, Bible Baptist, and conservative-Christian Presbyterian backgrounds to purchase an FM radio station in San Francisco, California, KEAR, then at 97.3 MHz, to broadcast traditional Christian Gospel to the conservative Protestant community and minister to the general public.^[15] Through the 1960s, Family Radio acquired six additional FM stations and seven other AM stations under guidelines established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).^[16]

Family Radio

In 1961, Family Radio began the Open Forum program, a live, weeknight call-in program that Camping hosts.^[3] Listeners call in primarily with questions about the meaning of certain passages from the Bible, and Camping answers them by means of interpretations, often with reference to other Biblical passages. Occasionally, questions are posed that relate to general Christian doctrine; ranging from the nature of sin and salvation, to matters involving everyday life, such as marriage, sexual morality and education.^[3] This program has continued to the present time and is broadcast on the more than 150 stations owned by Family Radio in the United States. The Open Forum is also translated into many foreign languages and (together with other Family Radio programming) is broadcast worldwide via shortwave station WYFR, a network of AM and FM radio stations, a cable television station and the Internet.



Family Radio sign in Denver predicting the end of the world on May 21, 2011

Family Radio runs various programs on its radio stations. Programs that do not conform to Camping's interpretation of the Biblical principle of comparing scripture with scripture (1 Corinthians 2:13) are normally removed from programming upon discovery. Before Camping started teaching that the "Church Age" had ended, programs produced outside of Family Radio were welcome provided they did not accept any "extra-Biblical revelation", and were associated with teachings accepted by the historic Christian faith. Camping now refuses any ministry associated with the organized church. These programs can be heard by radio, satellite, television, short wave and Internet broadcasts.

His organization also utilizes at least three television stations: WFME-TV in the New York City area; KFTL-CD in San Francisco, California; and KITL-LP in Boise, Idaho. Following the digital transition of 2009, Family Radio used its subchannels of WFME and KFTL for various purposes – in WFME's case, the digital signal of that station broadcasts ten separate subchannels, the first being the main channel, and the others carrying audio feeds of other Family Radio services, as well as one broadcasting NOAA Weather Radio.

Family Radio spent over US\$100 million on the information campaign for Camping's 2011 end times prediction, financed by sales and swap of broadcast outlets.^[17]

The Biblical Calendar of History

In 1970, Camping published *The Biblical Calendar of History* (later greatly expanded in *Adam When?*), in which he dated the Creation of the world to the year 11,013 BC and the Flood to 4990 BC, in contradiction to Bishop James Ussher's famous chronology, which placed creation at 4004 BC and the Flood at 2348 BC. Camping argued that Ussher's dates "agree neither with the Biblical nor the secular evidence" and thus Ussher's methodology was flawed.^[18]

Camping surmised that the word in the Old Testament scriptures "begat" did not necessarily imply an immediate father-son relationship, as had been assumed by Ussher and others who (he felt) hadn't fully studied the biblical timeline due to the incomplete information they had. Camping noted the use of the phrase "called his name" (Hebrew *qara shem*, found three times in Genesis 4–5), which he characterized as a "clue phrase" to indicate an immediate father-son relationship.^[18] Despite the fact that this "clue phrase" does not occur regarding Noah naming Shem, Camping maintains that there is enough evidence to otherwise conclude that they did in fact have an immediate father-son relationship. He also points out the use of *qara shem* in Isaiah 7:14, which he interprets as meaning, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."^[18]

Camping assumes that, since *qara shem* implies an immediate father-son relationship (e.g., Adam-Seth, Seth-Enosh and Lamech-Noah), all other relationships between the Antediluvian patriarchs (except Noah-Shem) are of ancestors and their distant descendants. That is, when one patriarch died, the next one who is mentioned was not his son, but

was actually a distant multi-generational grandson who was born in that same year. Camping's concept of the "reference patriarch," i.e., various events are referenced to a specific year of a particular patriarch's life as a means of keeping an accurate chronological record (in much the same way we reference historical events by year to the birth of Christ), is based on these patriarchs. Despite the fact that there is no evidence that any ancient civilization kept track of time in this way,^[18] Camping uses this concept as the backbone of his chronological view of Biblical history.

Philosophy and teachings

Camping teaches that a Biblical calendar has been hidden according to Daniel 12:9, Revelation 22:10 detailing the imminent end of the world (with alleged Biblical evidence pointing to the date for the Rapture as May 21, 2011),^[19] of the "end of the church age" (which asserts that churches are no longer the vehicle used by God for salvation, 1 Peter 4:17),^[20] and of predestination (Ephesians 1:4–5), according to which God determined before the beginning of the world which individuals are to be saved. In Camping's latest publications, he stated that May 21, 2011 would be "the first day of the Day of Judgment"^[21] and October 21, 2011 would be the end of the world.^[22] Critics call Camping a "date-setter" following his own method of Biblical interpretation. Camping maintains that he follows the Bible's method of Biblical interpretation.^[23]

Camping does not consider Family Radio a church and does not claim ordained or hierarchical authority within a church or institution. Camping claims that the church institutions do not employ the Bible alone as the sole authority. According to Camping, each church or denomination has its own unique set of doctrines and hermeneutics, which dictate how they understand the Bible. Family Radio's sole focus on the Bible is what he believes distinguishes it from churches. Followers continued to listen to Camping despite the fact that he was wrong in his previous prediction of the end of the world. In his book *1994?*, he claimed there was a very high likelihood that the world would end in September, 1994, although he did acknowledge in the book "the possibility does exist that I could be wrong."^[24] Camping has received criticism from a number of leaders, scholars, and laymen within the Christian community for his predictions on when the Rapture will take place. His critics argue that Jesus Christ taught that no man knows the day or the hour of the Lord's return.^{[25] [26]}

Central to Camping's teaching is his belief that the Bible alone is the Word of God in its entirety, and thus is absolutely trustworthy. However, he emphasizes, this does not mean that each sentence in the Bible is to be understood only literally. Rather, the meaning of individual Biblical passages also needs to be interpreted in the light of two factors. The first is the context of the Bible as a whole. The second is its spiritual meaning. In Camping's words, "the Bible is an earthly story with a Heavenly meaning." This stems from Mark 4:34, which states that Jesus did not speak to the disciples without using parables. Because Christ is the Word of God, therefore, the historical accounts of the Old Testament can also be seen as parables. For example, in the Book of Joshua, we find that Joshua (whose name in Hebrew is identical to the name "Jesus" in Greek), is a picture of Christ, who safely led the Israelites (who represented those who became saved) across the Jordan River (a representation of the wrath of God) into the land of Canaan (which represents the kingdom of God).^[27]

Since leaving the Christian Reformed Church in 1988, Camping has taught doctrines that explicitly conflict with the doctrines and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church and churches of the Reformed and Presbyterian traditions. Examples of how Camping's teachings vary from conventional Reformed doctrines include:

- Departing from Calvinist doctrine, Camping teaches a relative free will for humanity and that humans are not totally depraved.^[28] However, he subscribes to the idea that salvation is unmerited, cannot be achieved by good works or prayer, and is a pure act of God's grace.
- Departing from the doctrine of eternal torment for the unsaved in a place called Hell, Camping teaches annihilationism; that life will end and existence will cease for the unsaved soul.^[29]
- Departing from doctrines stating no one can know the time of Christ's second coming, he teaches that the exact time of the Rapture and the end of the world are to be revealed sometime towards the end of time (Daniel 12:9–13 prophecy).
- Camping teaches that all churches have become apostate and thus must be abandoned. He encourages personal Bible study and listening to his Family Radio broadcasts.^{[30] [31]}



Vehicle in San Francisco proclaiming the Harold Camping prediction.

Biblical calculations

Camping's Biblical teachings regarding the timing of Christ's second coming is based on the cycles of:

- Jewish feast days in the Hebrew calendar, as described in the Old Testament,
- the lunar month calendar (1 synodic month = 29.53059 days), and
- A close approximation of the Gregorian calendar tropical year (365.24219 days, rounded to 365.2422^[32]).

He projects these into modern times and combines the results with other information in the Bible.^{[33] [34] [35] [36]}

Camping's date for the crucifixion of Christ, Friday April 1, AD 33,^{[22] [33]} is the same day of the week but a different date than that cited by most 20th-century commentators, Friday April 3, AD 33.^[37] The dates differ because Camping uses the Gregorian calendar while most commentators use the Julian calendar, which had a two day difference during the 1st century (they now differ by thirteen days).

In 1992, Camping published a book titled *1994?*, in which he proclaimed that Christ's return might be on September 6, 1994. In that publication, he also mentioned that 2011 could be the end of the world. Camping's predictions use 1988 as a significant year in the events preceding the apocalypse; this was also the year he left Alameda Bible Fellowship. As a result, some individuals have criticized him for "date-setting."^[38] Camping's latest publications, *We are Almost There!* and *To God be The Glory*, refer to additional Biblical evidence which, in his opinion and that of others mentioned by him, pointed to May 21, 2011 as the date for the Rapture and October 21, 2011 as the date for the end of the world.

2011 end times prediction

Camping gained notoriety owing to his prediction that the Rapture would take place on May 21, 2011,^[39] ^[40] ^[41] and that the end of the world would subsequently take place five months later on October 21, 2011.^[42] Followers of Camping claimed that around 200 million people (approximately 3% of the world's population) would be raptured.^[43]

Reuters reported on May 21 that the curtains were drawn in Camping's house in Alameda, California and that no one was answering the door.^[44] Camping emerged from his home on May 22, saying that he was "flabbergasted" that the Rapture did not occur, that he was "looking for answers," and would say more when he returned to work on May 23.^[45]



Skeptic groups like IIG shown here counter-protest Harold Camping's end-of-the-world prediction on Hollywood Blvd, May 21, 2011.

On May 23, 2011 in an appearance before the press, Camping stated he had reinterpreted his prophecy. In his revised claim, May 21 was a "spiritual" judgment day, and the world will still come to an end October 21, 2011.^[46] ^[9] Camping said his company would not return money donated by followers to publicize the failed May 21 prediction, stating: "We're not at the end. Why would we return it?"^[47] ^[46]

Atheist and skeptic groups such as American Atheists and IIG gathered across the country with signs attracting attention away from Camping's followers who were in seclusion. "The issue is the Bible is mythology," said Larry Hicok, state director of the American Atheists.^[48]

Mainstream Christian groups have distanced themselves from Camping's predictions.^[49]

Health

On June 9, 2011, Camping suffered a stroke and was hospitalized.^[13] His speech has reportedly become slurred as a result of the stroke.^[50] On June 23, Camping's Family Radio station announced that it would replace his show, *Open Forum*, with new programming.^[14]

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External links

- Harold Camping biography (http://www.familyradio.com/english/connect/bio/haroldcamping_bio.html) at Family Radio official website
- Harold Camping's publications (<http://www.familyradio.com/graphical/literature/frame/>) at Family Radio
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