

# ***The Emasculated Gospel of Harold Camping & Family Radio***

---

## **Background**

**Harold Egbert Camping** is founder and president of Family Stations, Inc. ([Family Radio](#)), a religious FM/AM radio broadcasting network based in Oakland, California. He and his family were lifelong members of the Christian Reformed denomination (Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands) in which he served as an elder and bible teacher for many years.<sup>1</sup> The good intentioned Camping left, or was expelled from, the denomination in 1988 after a failed attempt to modify his local congregation's written doctrinal confession to be "more faithful to the Bible."

*And if we discover in our lives any kind of practice, or any kind of doctrine that is contrary to the Word of God, then as children of God, there will be within us an earnest desire to change that practice or that doctrine so that we will become more faithful to the Word of God.*<sup>2</sup>

Camping received a B.S. degree in civil engineering from the University of California at Berkeley in 1942. Following World War II, he successfully owned and operated a construction business. In 1958 he sold his business interests, and together with two others, formed Family Radio. He then began serving full-time as President and General Manager. Today, with affiliates in New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore/Washington, and San Francisco, all in prime commercial frequencies, the licenses for these stations are estimated to be worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

Beginning in 1961, Camping began the "Open Forum" program, a live weeknight call-in program. The program continues to be broadcast in the U.S. on the more than 140 stations owned by Family Radio. The Open Forum is also translated into many foreign languages and together with other programs is broadcast worldwide via shortwave, a network of AM / FM stations, and most recently via the Internet ([www.familyradio.com](http://www.familyradio.com)). Harold Camping has authored about 30 books and booklets most of which are available free of charge from Family Radio.

Events suggest that Camping fell victim to the date-setting 'swamp fever' and theories of Edgar C. Whisenant regarding Christ's second coming. Whisenant, a former NASA engineer and sometime Bible student, together with questionable Tennessee businessman, Norvell L. Olive<sup>3</sup>, published *On Borrowed Time, 88 Reasons Why the*

---

<sup>1</sup> The various Reformed denominations are "a complex tradition made up of strands and tributaries that are not only diverse but also sometimes quite oblivious to one another." Gordon-Conwell professor David F. Wells' excellent three volume *Reformed Theology in America* chronicles this theological and religious diversity.

<sup>2</sup> *What Is The True Gospel?* – Harold Camping

<sup>3</sup> A Google search identifies Mr. Olive and his related interests (e.g., New Life Corporation of America) in various lawsuits alleging to have "deceived senior citizens into buying revocable living trusts, long-term annuities or charitable gift annuities that they didn't need." See: <http://www.bizjournals.com/nashville/stories/2004/10/25/daily31.html>

*Rapture Could Be In 1988*, and *The Final Shout: Rapture Report 1989*.<sup>4</sup> When Whisenant's initial 1988 calculation proved wrong, he subsequently set revised dates of 1989, 1993, and 1994. Due to the predicable and inevitable loss of credibility, Whisenant faded into religious obscurity.

Camping, who may have set forth to fill the vacuum left by Whisenant, has published two books about the possible timing of the return of Christ. In his first, *1994?*, Camping identified September 6, 1994 as the date of Christ's return. Obviously, the calculation was wrong. His most recent prophetic publication (available free from Family Radio) is, *TIME HAS AN END: A Biblical History of the World- 11,013 BC to 2011 AD*. The main reason Camping now cites 2011 for the return of Jesus Christ is that it is 7,000 years from the Genesis 8 Flood which he claims was in 4990 BC. Having missed on his first prediction, he now explicitly avoids talking about a specific day.

Reformed Baptist Phil Johnson, editorial sidekick to John MacArthur, has this to say on his website regarding Family Radio:

Harold Camping has finally wiggled out completely. Having proved himself a false prophet by predicting that Christ would return to earth on September 6, 1994, Camping continues to make false prophecies. His most recent one is the absurd claim that the Church age has come to an end, and the Tribulation has begun. God is through with the church, Camping insists—and judgment has now begun. Camping wants all Christians to leave their churches and trust Family Radio to be the vehicle through which the gospel is preached to the whole world. (You can guess where Camping thinks you should send all your money.) This once-fine ministry is a tragic example of what can happen when one man is given too much control with no accountability. [Underline emphasis mine.]

Camping's false prophecies and speculations may or may not be attributable to "too much control with no accountability," as Johnson claims. Rather, the root cause for these aberrations may lie in his emasculated, Reformed-based understanding of the Gospel.

### ***The Gospel According to Harold Camping***

Harold Camping's deficient and overly-broad understanding of the Gospel is primarily set forth in his online publication, [\*What is the True Gospel?\*](#) Other references include: *The Gospel*, *God's Covenant of Grace* and *What Must I Do to Become Saved?* Further, Camping struggles to reconcile the sovereignty of God and unconditional election with the faith/believe requirement found in the Word.

Despite his high appreciation for the Bible as the Word of God, he can only speak of: the "Gospel of the Bible," "the Golden thread that runs through the Bible," the "Gospel of Jesus Christ," (per Reformed dogma, there can be only one Gospel), the King's substitutionary death and His current Kingdom, of the wonders of heaven and the "horrors" of hell, of the Synoptic Great Commission, of wanting to "live out my life in service to Him," and of "wanting to sacrifice my life, to lay it down on the alter of sacrifice."

---

<sup>4</sup> Other 1970-80s date-setting loonies include: Herbert W. Armstrong, David (Moses) Berg, Charles Taylor, William Branham, Adam Rutherford, John Strong, Willie Day Smith, Sun Myung Moon, Chuck Smith-CC, Pat Robertson, Lester Sumrall, and sadly others.

Tragically, Mr. Camping is oblivious to the unique revelation contained in the Pauline Epistles. His Dutch Reformed heritage and its *covenant* interpretational grid imposed on Scripture have crippled him and many like him. While the concept of *covenant* is important for understanding God's work upon the earth (e.g. Genesis 9) and with His chosen nation Israel, it is not the principle that unifies all of Scripture. The covenant approach limits believers to seeing the OT strictly as an analogy of the NT—Israel was the 'shadow' that has been replaced by the Church. Camping writes:

*But they fail to realize that God has set up types and figures in the Bible. Old Testament Israel was part of an earthly story, an historical picture pointing to the spiritual meaning of what the New Testament church was to be...*<sup>5</sup>

He and others of the Reformed tradition are blind to the NT Pauline revelation (mystery) that what in fact does unify Scripture is the unfolding of the nature and glory of God in Christ, manifest in two spheres--the *earthly* and the *heavenly* (Eph. 1: 9,10). Mr. Camping's religious tradition hinders him from seeing this and other all-important distinctions. Without the limitations of his religious baggage, Mr. Camping might discover the following Scriptural facts set forth by Christian author Miles J. Stanford:

While on earth, and prior to the Cross and in His humiliation, Jesus the Messiah gave the "*Gospel of the kingdom*" (Matt. 4: 23) exclusively to the nation of Israel. Then, when in heaven and glorified, after the Cross, the Lord Jesus Christ gave His "*glorious Gospel*" (1 Tim. 4:11) exclusively to His Church, primarily through Paul. "*The Gospel which was preached by me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ*" (Gal. 1: 11,12). Two totally different Gospels, both based upon the same shed Blood; but one for the *earthly*, the other for the *heavenly*.<sup>6</sup>

Because Mr. Camping sees only as far as the "Gospel of the kingdom" in Scripture, he falls short of understanding Christ's "glorious Gospel" revealed from heaven via the Apostle Paul. Without this Gospel, he is blind to the distinction between *sin* and *sins*, and falls far short in his understanding of [mankind's lost estate in the First Adam](#). Thus Camping can erroneously write:

*We need to be set free from sin through the blood of Christ.*<sup>7</sup>

But it is not the *blood* of Christ that God has designed to answer man's problem of *sin*. God's answer is the Cross! Stanford elaborates:

*"As by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all sinned [in Adam]" (Rom. 5:12). Unlike its product, sins, sin could not be forgiven, for it would be sin still. A forgiven thief is still a thief. Hence sin had to be condemned in death. "God sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3).*

---

<sup>5</sup> *What Is The True Gospel?* – Harold Camping

<sup>6</sup> [The Tragedy of Romans 5:12](#) – Miles J. Stanford

<sup>7</sup> *What Is The True Gospel?* – Harold Camping

Our sins were forgiven via the principle of substitution, i.e., "*Christ died for our sins according to the Gospel*" (1 Cor. 15:3). But our sin was condemned via the principle of identification, i.e., "*For He hath made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us*" (2 Cor. 5:21).

The Lord Jesus Christ did not die for sin, but for sins. Being made sin, our sin, He was judged, condemned, and crucified. He, in Himself being the sinless One, died unto sin--out of the realm of sin--having paid the price in full. Thence He was free to rise from among the dead into "*newness of life*"--heavenly, glorified, "new-creation life."<sup>8</sup>

Herein lies the explanation for why an otherwise, "once-fine" minister "wiggled out" into speculative theories of eschatology and date-setting. Harold Camping's writings and ministry are bereft of the teachings of the Apostle Paul and the heavenly "glorious Gospel" given by the Risen Lord Jesus Christ to the Church. By attempting to function under the "Gospel of the kingdom", sin (the sin nature) got the upper hand in his life and ministry. Brother Camping is not alone in his doctrinal calamity. Like him, ten of dozens of other Reformed men and ministries have, down through Church history, figuratively "jump the tracks" into moral and doctrinal aberrations.

Reader, it is imperative that you begin your Christian experience on safe and sound ground. Getting off on the wrong foot can potentially have grave consequences for your journey ahead. To gain a strong foundation for your Christian life, I recommend you read and study [\*\*THE NEW BIRTH EXPLAINED\*\*](#), written by the late Christian author, Miles J. Stanford.

---

Dan R. Smedra  
<http://withChrist.org>  
October 2006

---

<sup>8</sup> [\*The Tragedy of Romans 5:12\*](#) – Miles J. Stanford