



How to Overcome the False Predictions

“You may say in your heart, ‘How will we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’ When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him. (Dt. 18:21–22)

True Bible-believing, sanctified Christians the world over are running to this and related verses when it comes to the antics of our latest false prognosticator Harold Camping. Of course, this is just the beginning of what is sure to be a series of similar public debacles in the 18 months ahead of us as Camping has declared that what took place on May 21st was “invisible” but will become “visible” to the whole world this coming October 21st. (Plan your second “Rapture Party” now, kids.) And then we have next year being the last year of the Mayan calendar and an equally high-profile false teacher in Jack Van Impe who has selected December 21, 2012 as his date of doom. (Rapture parties will probably be passé by then.) But while such Scripture passages may be of comfort and reassurance among the biblically faithful, the truth is that it has almost no effect on either the weak and nominal Christians following this nonsense much less the unsaved who do not subscribe to anything Christian to begin with. Among those who still cling to God’s Word there is no problem overcoming the Campings of the world, the real problem is among most everyone else.

One of the things which concern me is that we might not recognize Satan’s strategy. He does not want anyone to talk about God’s Word in the first place, but if he cannot get them to forgo God’s Word he will certainly try to throw a satanic monkey wrench into the works. His most obvious strategy is to get false teachers to misrepresent God’s

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Word so as to render it ineffective; a less obvious trick is to get us to alter the discussion so as to marginalize what is most important by over-emphasizing what is at best a side topic.

For instance, I can see a Christian and his unsaved neighbor having a friendly conversation across their fence this week. They both agree that Camping and company are loony tunes, but the Christian feels compelled to try and set the record straight where the truth of God's Word is concerned. The Christian wants to refute Camping's teachings by exposing and contrasting them to God's Word which is essential among Christians, but may not be the most beneficial in conversing with the unsaved. What ensues is a discussion of what numbers in the Bible mean, how Camping's notion of how things work is contrary to the Prophets, how his eschatology does not match up with so many things in Scripture, and a host of related truths about the End Times. But do you see what has happened here? Instead of talking to an unsaved person about the need for Christ in their life—the absolute prerequisite to understanding anything pertaining scripturally to the End Times—they are “talking shop” about numerology, eschatology, and a myriad of side topics which might edifying among Believers, but of little value to a non-believer.

Satan does not want us talking about the End Times in the first place, but he will settle for getting us to talk to the unsaved about nothing **but** things like the Rapture, the meaning of “666”, the latest rumor of who the Antichrist is and so forth. If he can do that, he has successfully arranged for us to give up preaching the truth of the Gospel by over-emphasizing another truth in its place. I am not worried whether the biblically literate among us can see through Camping and his ilk, I am concerned to what degree the biblically literate are being rendered ineffective by exchanging the opportunity to share the Gospel for the perceived opportunity to “set the record straight”.

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I am not advocating the abdication of the truth, I just want us to think about what is most important here. If we win the unsaved to Christ through the Gospel, we can disciple them in the right eschatology and all things pertaining to the End Times; if we only win the debate that Camping is cuckoo as a Cocoa Puff[®], what have we really accomplished? I fully understand that this might be the **starting point** of the discussion, but do not lose sight of what is most important and forget to eventually bring the conversation back around to the **real** issue of Christ and the cross.

“However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” (Lk. 18:8b)

This is also a very famous verse which is often drawn upon in discussion about the Last Days. But have you looked at the context in which Christ spoke these words? He has just completed a teaching on His Second Coming (Lk. 17:22-37), the one which emphasizes how the Last Days will unfold in the character of the days of Noah and the days of Lot. In other words, it is given in the context of a teaching about the **lack** of faithfulness in the End Times followed by His teachings on the **need** for faithfulness in the following chapter. (Remember, there were no verse and chapter markings to break things up originally.)

Biblical faith is not defined as the world defines “faith”, something akin to wishing really hard for a pony while blowing out the candles on your birthday cake. When we come across this word in either Testament we can best understand it as being interchangeable with “faithfulness”. This verse can be fairly rendered, “However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find **faithfulness** on the earth?” Every Christian during every epoch of history is supposed to be faithful, but in the Last Days it is even more important. The last generation of Believers has an even greater responsibility to be light and salt to the world than any generation before it.

What did Jesus teach we were to do with the information He provided about His Return in the Olivet Discourse? In the Parable of the Ten

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Virgins (Mt. 25:1-13) we are to be faithful to the Word; in the Parable of the Talents (Mt. 25:14-30) we are to be faithful in our service and ministry; in the judgment of the sheep and the goats (Mt. 25:31-46) we are to be faithful in our application of love for others. (Examine the criteria by which each was judged—every issue pertains to the biblical love of others.) Yes, there will be signs and events, but our reaction is supposed to be **faithfulness**. We are supposed to be examples of a crucified life embracing exclusively God's Word and ways so that we might win others to Christ as earth's days draw to a close. Faithfulness is even more important than ever.

Take the time to examine what the Apostles have to say about the End Times in their epistles. Instead of focusing specifically on the details they provide about the Last Days, look at what generally surrounds those teachings which, like Jesus, tell us what we are supposed to do **with** that End Times information. James, Paul, Peter and John all teach the higher requirement of faithfulness in the Last Days. Telling the truth about the fulfillment of prophecy is important, but being a visible testimony of the power of the cross and resurrection are even **more** important. In fact, I submit to you that this is the best thing we can do to render the Harold Camping's of the world ineffective.

Even a Bible-illiterate unsaved person can see through Camping, but it is far more likely that this will be overcome in their life not by a friendly discussion on eschatology but in the testimony and example of your personally changing life. Living a visibly faithful life in Christ provides those in our sphere of influence to be convicted by a genuine work of the Spirit which brings the conversation back around to what is most important—the cross. We can always **begin** with the End Times, but it still has to come back to the cross in order to provide the proper context for the discussion of anything pertaining to the End Times.

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As it was from the very beginning, there has always been an eschatological component to the basic Gospel message. Both John the Baptist and Christ preached...

Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Mt. 3:1-2)

From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Mt. 4:17)

We are quick on the draw to point out "*the kingdom of heaven is at hand*", but let us not forget the "*repent*" part of the message. Let us realize that however much damage rendered by false teachers such as Camping that we can personally overcome it right where we live by being a true example and testimony of Christ who can allow others to see the truth based on a life changing into the image and likeness of Him.

We must keep in mind that Paul teaches that a true prophet is not simply someone who prophesies correctly, but is a faithful follower of all of God's Word. Just like the prophets of old whose personal faithfulness witnessed to the validity of what God was speaking through them, so it with us individually to all those around us.

*If anyone thinks he is a prophet **or spiritual**, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. (1 Co. 14:37-38)*

Step up and be recognized as one of the faithful to overcome those who so obviously are not.

In Him,

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