

May 22, 2011
Matthew 24:36

ARE YOU STILL HERE?

Are you still here? Are you sure? Let me clarify where “here” is! Are you here on Earth, or are you elsewhere? According to Harold Camping, the end of the world was to have begun yesterday, on May 21, 2011 at 6:00 p.m. At that time the believers were to be raptured into heaven and be with the LORD forever. Those who remain are unbelievers and will suffer great horrors and tortures for 153 days. Then on October 21, 2011, Jesus will come and send them and all unbelievers into hell for everlasting punishment and then He will destroy the entire universe.

Who is making this prediction? Harold Camping! He is a multi-millionaire who owns some sixty radio stations across the United States, which all carry this warning of the end coming. He also owns stations in South Africa, Turkey, and Russia. Billboards convey the message: “Blow the trumpet, warn the people!” Camping sent out an armada of camper vans that covered every State with the warning to get prepared for the end is coming soon. Ironically hundreds of people seem to believe him. Well, this is what Harold Camping tells us. But I am more concerned over what my LORD Jesus tells us than what Camping alleges!

Consider what the resurrection of Jesus tells us! First it tells us that God the Father accepted Jesus’ blood sacrifice for all our sins. God’s anger has been atoned. We are forgiven! Second, the resurrection tells us that Jesus is true God. He is the second person of the Holy Trinity. Third, the resurrection tells we can believe the words of Jesus. What Jesus tells us is true. And fourth, the resurrection tells us that just as Jesus rose from the dead, someday, on the Last Day, we too will rise.

It is the third blessing of the resurrection that I call your attention to: we can believe what Jesus tells us, promises us, and assures us in His Word. Because we believe we come to Him in repentance when the guilt of our sins weighs us down. Because we believe we call upon Him in our times of trouble. Because we believe we come to Him for strength and rest when we are burdened by life. Because we believe we are assured that as we seek first His kingdom He will provide us with whatever we need for life. And because we believe we know that there is nothing to fear about death. Because we believe the words of Jesus we don’t have to worry, be afraid, or live in guilt. Because we believe the words of Jesus we have hope, comfort, courage, peace, and joy in life. Because we believe in Jesus we find direction, meaning, and purpose for living. My friends believe Jesus!

Knowing we can believe and trust Jesus' Word, why then do we worry about the world ending and fret over predictions like that of Harold Camping? What does Jesus tell us in His word about the Last Day? Look at Matthew 24:36! What does it say? "**No man knows the day or the hour.**" No one! So why worry or get excited? Believe Jesus, not foolish men. Are you still here?

The point is this: Don't try to discover a hidden formula or secret code in Scripture that will tell you when the End will come. It only wastes our time and needlessly frightens and scares people. Rather we should spend our time doing two much more important things. First, we should prepare ourselves for the Second Coming. We do this by repenting for all our sins, pleading with God to forgive us, and trusting that for Jesus' sake God forgives us. And then forgiven, we begin to live a new life that gives glory to God and serves our fellow man. And second, share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others. Tell why God sent His only begotten Son into the world and how Jesus saved us from our sins. Tell them of God's love. Show them in your life the new life that Jesus empowers us to live. Are you still here?

Camping insisted believers were to be raptured at 6:00 p.m. last night. He based his claim, in part, on Matthew 24:40-42. But look at the context of Jesus' words. He does not say that people will be raptured 153 days before the end. Rather He speaks in reference to the suddenness at which the Flood came to Noah's generation. So too, our LORD Jesus tells us, the End will come with unexpected suddenness. What does Jesus's Word really teach us about the "rapture?" (See 1 Thessalonians 4:17) Jesus tells us in His Word that on the Last Day, as He appears in the sky, coming for judgment, the believers will rise and meet Him as He comes down from heaven.

According to Camping, no one can be sure of his salvation and his being raptured will assure him of being saved. But the Scriptures teach us to put our hopes for eternal life in Jesus and only Jesus. Believe Jesus' words: "**I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me!**" Trust Jesus is true God. Rely on His work alone! Believe Jesus became our substitute on the Cross, shed His blood for our sins, and rose again. You can be absolutely sure today that you are saved and will go to heaven with Jesus!

Are you still here? Then we have work to do. In the Epistle reading St. Peter tells us that God has saved us and brought us together for a purpose (See 1 Peter 2:9). Because God cleansed us with the blood of Jesus we are "**a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people belonging to God so that, or for the purpose that, we may declare the glory of God who called us out of darkness**

into His wonderful light!” My friends, God gave us a task, an assignment, and job to do until Jesus returns. And it is not to try to calculate when the world will end. Rather, let us do the purpose for which we were saved: let us tell others what God has done and still does for us through Jesus Christ His Son and our LORD and Savior! Let us show them the way to the Father! It’s only through Jesus!

Because Jesus said, “**No one knows the day or the hour** (when the End will come),” then **NO ONE KNOWS!** Don’t get excited or frazzled when someone who does not believe the Scriptures says the world will on this or that day. So let’s live every day to its fullest and to the glory of God. Jesus tells us three times in Revelation 22, “**Behold, I am coming soon!**” This means the End possibly could come today, but it will probably come tomorrow. We can be sure it is coming! It will come when we least expect it so let us always be ready. Because you believe that Jesus died for you and rose again don’t worry about the End coming! You know you are loved, forgiven, and are saved already!

Are you still here? I am, and am I ever glad! Now I can continue to tell others the Good News that Jesus died for my sins and rose again; the Good News that God loves me and forgives me; the Good News that God will care for me, provide for me, and protect me in this life; the Good News that because Jesus lives I too will live with Him in heaven forever.

Are you still here? Then don’t fret and worry about the End. Let’s be about our LORD’S work as long as we are still here! In Jesus’ name! Amen!