



The Biblical Heritage Center's
DISCOVERING THE BIBLE

Following the journey of the memes of the Bible from their original cultural & historical origins to their influence in our world today.

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The End DID NOT Come – Again!

By Jim Myers

In case you haven't heard, the end of the world was supposed to have taken place on **May 21, 2011** according to Reverend Harold Camping¹ -- and it didn't. He is a man with a track record, because he also predicted the end would take place on **September 6, 1994**. You have to admit that he sticks to his guns though – he is now predicting that the "end of the world" will take place on **October 21, 2011**.

Why does he keep doing it? I do not personally know anything about Rev. Camping or his true motives, but I think people should be aware of the fact that his "ministry" brought in a whopping **\$18,300,000.00 in donations in 2009**. During the period from 2005 through 2009 the organization received a total of **\$80,091,023.00** in donations. According to the organization's IRS filing² in 2009, the ministry had **assets of more than \$104 million**, including \$34 million in stocks or other publicly traded securities.

I do not know if that much money plays a role in what the reverend does, but I think people should be aware of these facts – ***especially those who lost most or everything they owned because they believed him***. CNN Money reported that "a lonely woman who believed in the teachings of Harold Camping recently died and left nearly her entire estate to Family Radio (his ministry). *Her family members believe that had she lived long enough to see the May 21 prediction fail, she would not have left her inheritance to the Christian radio network behind the failed doomsday claim.*"³ With a \$104,000,000.00 in assets, do you think they could give a refund to these poor people, along with many others?

The real question is -- What does this say about us? Did notice how much media coverage Camping's failed prediction received. I saw it multiple times on CNN, CBS, ABC and NBC in the weeks leading up to May 21st and the week that followed. *Why did the largest media organizations devote so much air time to this story? The answer is simple. They believed it would attract a large audience and that attracts advertisers.*

So, why are so many people be interested? It is estimated that 76% of the America adult population identifies itself as "Christian."⁴ Any subject that over three-fourths of the American population has an interest in will attract the attention of the media and the "end of the world" has always been an attention getter!

Two thousand years of failed predictions preceded Rev. Camping's. For almost 2,000 years Christians have been announcing one date after another that the "end of the world" would take place – many with graphic descriptions – "hell fires and brimstone," and more recently, the "Rapture." The Rapture has become one of the most popular doctrines in many evangelical circles; especially after the publication of many popular novels and videos. But, you may be surprised to learn that the beliefs about the Rapture are only a few centuries old.

An allusion to the Rapture first appeared in a book written in **1788** by a Catholic priest named Emmanuel Lacunza and **published in Spain in 1812**. John Darby, a Brethren preacher, **taught the Rapture doctrine in 1827**. The evangelist, William Blackstone popularized Rapture doctrine in his best seller, "Jesus is Coming." The Rapture doctrine entered mainstream Christianity with its inclusion in the Scofield Reference Bible. **There is no real history of the Rapture doctrine until the 1800's.**⁵

A familiar place to hear about the Rapture was during evangelical "altar calls;" the highlight of revival meetings. I heard it many times during my teenage years attending summer revivals. Well, you will probably be surprised to learn that "altar calls" are an even a newer creation than the Rapture. The most famous evangelists of the Great Awakenings -- George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and even John Wesley -- never used or heard of an "altar call." Later, popular evangelists, like Charles Spurgeon, firmly refused to adopt it and even criticized its use severely.

The creator of the "altar call" was Charles Finney. In Finney's crusades (c. 1830) seats at the front were reserved for those who, after the sermon, would respond to the challenge to come to the Lord's side. Those who were thus "anxious" for their souls were invited to walk forward to the "anxious seat" where counsel and prayer would be given them. The following quote from Finney's Lectures on Revival reveals a great deal about his decision to use it.

"Preach to him, and at the moment he thinks he is willing to do anything . . . bring him to the test; call on him to do one thing, to make one step that shall identify him with the people of God. . . . If you say to him, 'there is the anxious seat, come out and avow your determination to be on the Lord's side,' and if he is not willing to do a small thing as that, then he is not willing to do anything for Christ."⁶

With slight variations, Finney's new ritual spread with increasing popularity throughout evangelical groups that had been influenced by "New Light" Evangelicalism.⁷ The most famous modern evangelists employed it with undeniable success -- Dwight L. Moody, Peter Cartwright, Sam Jones, R. A. Torrey, Billy Sunday, Bob Jones, Gipsy Smith, Mordacai Ham, John R. Rice, and Billy Graham -- to name a few.

The man who introduced the new evangelicalism was Samuel Davies, a New Light pastor in 1748. He did not preach about abstract moral principles or an abstract universe or an abstract God. Davies preached about *your* life and *your* relationship to God, who seeks *you* out of a condemned world. His method consisted of "convicting" the people of sin first by making them so aware of their own **guilt** that they **feel** utterly **helpless**. This despair becomes repentance, which makes them **susceptible to the act of faith**. *Creating guilt and a feeling of helplessness were essential to the act of conversion. After conversion, the thrust of the method was to encourage and instruct the newly converted Christian in a new life of discipline and prayer.*⁸ The new system had four distinguishing core beliefs.

- (1) **An emotional experience** -- The convert must have had a personal religious experience of overpowering emotions rooted in a specific time and place. Their meetings were often characterized by seizures, convulsions, and uncontrollable weeping.
- (2) **Baptism** -- The newly converted adult was immersed in water after making a profession of faith in Christ Jesus.
- (3) **Submission** -- Submission to the authority of the church to scrutinize carefully the personal as well as public life of each member.
- (4) **Membership** -- Conversion brought him immediately into a community.⁹

This marked a major transition in Christian belief systems. Prior to this point a period of instruction prior to conversion to Christianity. In the new form of Christianity an "emotional experience" was the primary prerequisite for conversion. A potential convert to Judaism, Catholicism or to one of the early Protestant groups (i.e., Lutheran) was required to undergo a period of instruction. The instructional period was not only a time of mental exercises, but it was a period in which the prospective convert learned about the religion's traditions and rituals, and how to incorporate them into their daily activities. By the end of the period of instruction the person would understand the religion he or she was joining. *Under the new belief system a person could be invited to a service and come without any intention of converting, but by the end of the meeting he or she could be a Christian.*

The foundation for the new belief system had been created by Martin Luther to prove that his new church had legitimate divine authority to operate outside of the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. His new authority model was based on five pillars.

(1) ***Sola scriptura*** ("***by Scripture alone***") The Bible is the only inspired and authoritative word of God the only source for Christian doctrine accessible to all requires no interpretation outside of itself.

(2) ***Sola fide*** ("***by faith alone***") – Justification, being declared right by God and saved, is received by faith alone without any mixture of or need for good works.

(3) ***Sola gratia*** ("***by grace alone***") -- Salvation comes by God's grace or "unmerited favor" only — not as something merited by the sinner. Salvation is an unearned gift from God for Jesus' sake.

(4) ***Solus Christus*** ("***through Christ alone***") -- Christ is the only mediator between God and man, and that there is salvation through no other.

(5) ***Soli Deo gloria*** ("***glory to God alone***") -- Salvation is accomplished solely through His will and action — not only the gift of the all-sufficient atonement of Jesus on the cross, but by the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer.

Martin Luther, however, did not allow an uninstructed person to immediately become a convert. Luther expected potential converts to receive instruction in the following:

- ◇ Ten Commandments
- ◇ The Creed
- ◇ The Lord's Prayer
- ◇ The Sacraments of Baptism
- ◇ The Lord's Supper

After receiving instructions the person would be expected to be able to answer the following questions:

1. Do you believe that you are a sinner?
2. How do you know this?
3. Are you sorry for your sins?
4. What have you deserved from God because of your sins?
5. Do you hope to be saved?
6. In whom then do you trust?

7. Who is Christ?
8. How many Gods are there?
9. What has Christ done for you that you trust in Him?
10. Did the Father also die for you?
11. How do you know this?
12. What are the Words of Institution?
13. Do you believe, then, that the true body and blood of Christ are in the Sacrament?
14. What convinces you to believe this?
15. What should we do when we eat His body and drink His blood, and in this way receive His pledge?
16. Why should we remember and proclaim His death?
17. What motivated Christ to die and make full payment for your sins?
18. Finally, why do you wish to go to the Sacrament?
19. What should admonish and encourage a Christian to receive the Sacrament frequently?
20. But what should you do if you are not aware of this need and have no hunger and thirst for the Sacrament?¹⁰

As you can see, a new convert would have a basic understanding of his or her new religion's basic doctrines. They would know where to find them in their Bible. The traditional forms of Christianity also required their clergy to meet certain educational requirements.

The new sects of American Christianity adopted an American characteristic that was becoming popular in describing its citizens – "rugged individualism." Under the new belief system new converts were taught that "the Bible" required no interpretation outside of itself and the Holy Spirit would reveal the meanings of its words to every believer. They could go home and start reading their Bibles and believed that the source of their understanding was the Holy Spirit. I seriously doubt that this form of Christianity could have come into being in any other nation. The Americans were a people separated from the traditional religious seats of power by the Atlantic Ocean.

The new Christians were spread out along the great American frontier and separated by many miles. They lived in rural areas and the traveling ministers were the links that connected the scattered communities and shared their particular opinions and scriptural interpretations. Many had no formal educations in theological subjects. They opened their Bibles, prayed for the Holy Spirit to reveal the meanings of the words, and declared that what they preached was "the Word of God."

Does the Holy Spirit give conflicting and contradicting messages? People came to America from many different places with different languages and

cultures. The Bibles they read were translations made in English, German, French, Italian, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Spanish, etc. Many had no formal training in Greek or Hebrew. The number of new Christian denominations began to grow exponentially as the numbers of new interpretations were proclaimed. I am not implying that there were no conflicts in the other groups; however, they did not result in an explosion of new sects. Take a look at the figures below and the number of denominations in each group¹¹:

- ◇ **Independents** - about 22000 denominations
- ◇ **Protestants** - about 9000 denominations
- ◇ **Marginals** - 1600 denominations
- ◇ **Orthodox** - 781 denominations
- ◇ **Roman Catholics** - 242 denominations
- ◇ **Anglicans** - 168 denominations

The total number of Christian denominations in 2000 was estimated to be approximately 33,000, of which 22,000 were Independents. Now let's look at the growth in Christian denominations since the original Jewish Jesus Movement:

- ◇ 33 CE - 1
- ◇ 1800 - 500
- ◇ 1900 - 1,900
- ◇ 1970 - 18,800
- ◇ 2000 - 33,800
- ◇ 2007 - 39,000
- ◇ 2025 - 55,000 (projected)¹²

Are you getting the picture? The reality is that just about anyone can create a new religion and call it "Christian" in America today. They all declare that their beliefs are based on the Jesus of the Gospels and that their doctrines are "the Word of God." Another basic characteristic is that belief in their doctrines is required to acquire eternal life in Heaven and avoid an eternity of punishment in Hell. **What do you think the Jewish Jesus would think about this?**

PLEASE STOP! DON'T CONTINUE UNTIL THE ABOVE FACTS SINK IN!

After studying the words attributed to the Jewish Jesus for over 25 years, it is my conclusion that his remarkable message was based on specific wisdom principles that are found in the Jewish Scriptures. His audience had been instructed in that wisdom before they ever heard his message. It was his unique teachings about that wisdom that caught their attention, and raised questions from the scribes and Pharisees. But, later Gentile Christians did not have the foundation of the Hebrew Scriptures that the first generation of followers received in their synagogues.

1,700 years later the new Christian belief systems elevated individual preachers over the institution¹³ and allowed them to have more of an impact over their followers than previous religious authorities. The thing that quickly became more pronounced than ever before was that “beliefs were more important than actions.” On a societal level the impact of this new belief system was that “getting souls into heaven” was a higher priority than taking care of their lives on the earth.

The new evangelicalism was the continuation of a far greater conflict that had existed in Christianity since the Jewish Jesus Movement left Jerusalem after the Temple was destroyed. The answer to the question of how to be included in the group that will have eternal life on the “Great Day of Judgment,” which was given by Jesus, was very simple and understandable. It did not need any theological interpretation.

Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?” . . . Then they (the ones who didn’t help) will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”¹⁴

The bottom line is simply this – **What is the highest priority of God?** Every denomination that I have studied *makes it very clear that “correct beliefs” are their highest priority.* Actions play a subordinate role in those belief systems. **The focus of the messages of the Jewish Jesus was actions – not beliefs.** We have now had almost 2,000 years of belief based religious authority systems. What have they produced? ***Inquisitions, heresy & blasphemy trials, countless divisions in relationships, families & communities – and lots of hatred.*** Don’t you think the Jewish Jesus’ message might work better? **BHC**

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Camping

² http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20110524/ap_on_re_us/us_apocalypse_saturday

³ <http://au.christiantoday.com/article/woman-leaves-inheritance-to-harold-campings-ministry-upsets-family/11211.htm>

⁴ http://www.adherents.com/rel_USA.html

⁵ <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2006/08/08/234333/-History-of-Rapture-Doctrine>

⁶ <http://www.biblicalstudies.com/bstudy/contempry/altar.htm>

⁷ Religion in the Old South By Donald G. Matthews © 1977; The University of Chicago Press; Chicago, IL; p. 16.

⁸ Ibid, p. 19.

⁹ Ibid, p. 24.

¹⁰ <http://bookofconcord.org/smallcatechism.php>

¹¹ World Christian Encyclopedia by Barrett, Kurian, Johnson (Oxford Univ Press, 2nd edition, 2001)

¹² <http://www.philvaz.com/apologetics/a106.htm>

¹³ Popes & Bankers by Jack Cashill © 2010; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; p. 53

¹⁴ Matthew 25:35-39; 46b

July Memorials

In Loving Memory

**MARJORIE
NEELLEY
PITNER**

**December 30, 1914
July 17, 2007**

*May you dwell under His
wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*

In Their Remembrance

May their memories inspire us to seek those qualities of mind and heart which they shared when we walked life's journey together. May we help to bring closer to fulfillment their highest ideals and noblest strivings.

May their memories deepen our loyalty to those things which we valued and shared -- faith, love, peace and devotion and our biblical heritage. As long as we live, they too will live; for they are now a part of us, as we remember them.

(Inspired from prayers found in Yitzhor Reflections - The New Mahzor - The Prayer Book Press)

In Loving Memory

**FANNIE EDNA
GRAHAM
WARD**

**July 15, 1891
July 10, 1982**

*May you dwell under His
wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*

Remembering those who came before us is a very important part of the Biblical Heritage Center's mission. It is our privilege to honor them by the **BHC Memorial Garden and Memorials** which are printed in this newsletter. The Memorial Garden is on the website at <http://www.biblicalheritage.org>. Please visit it the next time you are on the Internet and stop back by often. If you would like to add your loved one to this section, send the information to us. There is no charge, but donations are accepted. Remember those who have meant so much to you with a BHC Memorial.

Should "Fear & Guilt" Be More Valuable Than "Facts"?

Hundreds of millions of dollars are contributed every year to organizations that use the new "emotion-based belief systems" discussed in this newsletter. "Fear and guilt" are proven fund raisers.

BHC is on the opposite side of the equation – we provide information that "lifts fear" from the people and focuses them on how to protect, preserve and enhance the quality of life here and now.

We have a tremendous amount of information that is urgently needed, but **our greatest challenge is the lack of funds to publish and distribute it.** *If you value accurate factual information more than manipulation by fear and guilt – become a generous contributor and help us help many others.*

BHC Welcomes & Appreciates Your Support

The Biblical Heritage Center's primary mission is to provide factual information that will help you make quality decisions in life, religion and spirituality. BHC is not a religious organization and thus requires no one to adhere to an official "Statement of Faith" or "Religious Creed," but hopes and strongly suggests that you adopt our "**Informed Believer's Primary Guideline**" -- no matter what your religious or spiritual background:

**"My Belief System will be large enough to include all of the facts;
I will be open enough to allow it to be tested;
and I will be flexible enough to change it
when I become aware of errors or new facts."**

How can one be committed to the "truth" if he or she excludes facts from their Belief System? If one refuses to allow his or her Belief System to be tested, how will they know if it contains erroneous information or lacks specific facts? Wouldn't it be dishonest for a person to say that he or she values the truth the most, but refuses to change their Belief System when they become aware of errors or new facts?

The Biblical Heritage Center believes that the adoption of the Informed Believer's Primary Guideline makes it possible for people with diverse Belief Systems from a wide range of cultures to join together in the an honest pursuit of truth about their heritages. Join others who are committed to testing their beliefs, first!

BHC distributes information through its newsletters - *Discovering the Bible*, and *Facts & Beliefs Report* - and by the BHC website, BHC Blog, BHC Google Group, Twitter, BHC Facebook Page and local meetings.

BHC is funded by tax-deductible donations from individuals who share BHC's commitment to accurately understand the histories of our religious and spiritual heritages. Your support will help us greatly. BHC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Donations may be made online at -

<http://www.biblicalheritage.org/BHC/donate.htm> or mailed to:

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