

**BETHEL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
FAIR LAWN, NJ
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MAY 29, 2011**

**The Coming of Christ:
Cleverly Devised Myths vs. The Certainty of God's Word**

In the wake of his failed prophecy that Christ would return on Saturday, May 21, Harold Camping went back to the airwaves on Monday, May 23. He insisted that he was right about the date; he was only wrong about what Christ's return would look like. What really took place was a "spiritual" return, as opposed to a physical one, and May 21 is now to be understood as an "invisible Judgment Day."

In the midst of this new revelation, Camping once again summarized his prophetic calendar. According to him, there are four days that are "very crucial" for us to understand about the judgment of God and end of the world.:

1. May 21, 1988. This was the day that God poured out His judgment upon the Church age. At this time, Christ was removed from the churches and Satan was installed to rule in His place. Anyone who thinks that he can be saved in a local church today is sadly mistaken.
2. September 7, 1994. This was the day of "Spiritual Jubilee." In the 2300 days between May 21, 1988 and September 7, 1994, virtually no one could be saved. But on this day, God lifted His judgment on those outside the Church; His judgment, however, continues on those within the Church.
3. May 21, 2011. This is now the "Invisible Day of Judgment" when God has poured out His "spiritual" judgment on the whole world. What this means is not exactly clear.
4. October 21, 2011. This will be the "Final Day of Judgment," when the world will truly come to an end. When asked if he will bequeath his annual \$104 million dollar media ministry to the unconvinced, Camping asked how that would be possible. No one will be left after October 21 – absolutely no one.

In light of these latest revelations, I couldn't help but think of the words of the Apostle Peter in the passage before us this morning, 2 Peter 1:16-21. It is a text in which he contrasts the truth about Christ's coming, as revealed by the New Testament apostles and Old Testament prophets, with the falsehood of "cleverly devised myths."

As anyone knows, a myth is a made-up story. It has no basis in fact. By telling such stories, the false teachers of Peter's day were subverting the truth about Christ, introducing "destructive heresies . . ." (2 Peter 2:1). Evidently, they were motivated by a desire for money and were commercializing the Christian faith to their own selfish advantage; Peter's warning is quite clear ". . . these teachers will exploit you with *stories they have made-up*" (NIV; 2 Peter 2:3). Their influence was gaining ground, leading astray (and fleecing) the weaker members of the flock.

So how does the Apostle Peter respond, as a “fellow-elder” of the Church (1 Peter 5:1)? We need to look no further than this passage to find the answer. It unfolds in two parts: (1) He reminds all of his readers (including us) that he did not invent his message about the return of Christ. He was an eyewitness to the transfiguration, which for him foreshadowed the *visible* glory of Christ’s return (1:16-18). (2) He then turns to the Old Testament prophetic witness in support of his teaching about Christ’s glorious return. In the process, he tells us that the Holy Spirit is the Source of this prophetic word, enabling the prophets to speak (and write) the truth about the second coming of Christ (1:19-21). We are therefore admonished to pay attention to the certainty of the prophetic Word of God, as opposed to the cleverly devised myths of men.

A. The Apostolic Witness: Peter’s preaching about the Second Coming results from his own eyewitness experience (1:16-18).

Within these verses, Peter is recounting his personal experience with the Lord Jesus during the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-46a). He knew that Christ had come in “power;” he observed the “honor and glory” that God the Father bestowed on His beloved Son; he heard the voice of the Father declare Jesus to be His Son. He clearly sees this glorious and visible event as a prelude of Christ’s final coming, and contrasts this truth with the falsehood of man-made myths. Any notion of a “secret” rapture or an “invisible” day of judgment is totally foreign to the apostolic witness concerning the Second Coming of Christ! (note the “we” of v. 16)

B. The Prophetic Witness: Peter’s preaching about the Second Coming is anchored in the prophetic word of Scripture (1:19-21).

According to Peter, the prophetic writings of the Old Testament are even “more sure” than his personal experience at the Transfiguration. With this understanding, we can clearly see how he is confirming the complete and total reliability of the written Word of God. As such, we are admonished to “pay attention” to the certainty of the prophetic Word – it functions as a lamp shining in dark places, pointing us to the truth about the coming day of final judgment at Christ’s return (when the “day dawns” and the “Morning Star rises in your hearts.)

But above all else, we must remember that *all* the Old Testament Scriptures (including the ones that point us to Christ) are inspired by the Holy Spirit:

This is a key verse for the doctrine of Scripture, indicating that Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit, but at the same time **men spoke** God’s words, using their own personalities, knowledge, background, vocabulary, and style. ‘They were carried along’ implies that the inspiration of Scripture was invisibly directed by the Holy Spirit, though without overriding the personalities of the human authors. Thus Scripture is fully the Word of God, even though recorded in the words of human beings. (ESV Study Bible)

When I was a child, I learned a simple song that has served me well over the many years I’ve

been privileged to preach God's Word. It is especially relevant today, in light of so many man-made myths that have arisen within the Church.

“The B-I-B-L-E, yes, that's the Book for me.

I stand *alone* on the Word of God,

The B-I-B-L-E.”