

THE END OF THE CHURCH AGE... AND AFTER

By Harold Camping

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PREFACE

The thought that the church age would come to an end is a shocking idea to those of us who have been taught the amillennial (a-mil) or the postmillennial (post-mil) idea of the return of Christ. In both of these schools of thought, the concept that the churches and congregations would be here and would be functioning as God's people all the way to the end of the world and the return of Christ has been thoroughly ingrained into our thinking.

However, in the churches that have been taught the premillennial (premil) idea of the return of Christ, it is amazing to note that they have been taught that there would come a time when the church age would come to an end prior to the end of the world. True, they did not use the language that there would come a time when the church age would end. However, effectively, this is what they were saying when they taught the concept that there would come a time when the believers would be raptured.

In fact, while many details of the closing events of this world's history have been grossly misunderstood in that pre-mil concept, it is remarkable that they correctly had been given a faint glimpse of much of the Biblical outline of the events that must unfold before the world ends. A comparison of basic pre-mil teaching with the true Biblical teaching shows the following.

Pre-Mil Teaching	True Biblical Teaching
1. Church age will come to an end	Church age will come to an end
2. At the end of church age, the true believers will be raptured	At the end of church age, true believers will be driven from churches and commanded to depart from churches
3. End of church age coincides with the beginning of great tribulation	End of church age coincides with the beginning of great tribulation
4. During tribulation, the Jews who are blood descendants of Abraham will evangelize the world	During tribulation, the spiritual Jews, the true believers from every nation, will evangelize the world. A great multitude which no man can number will be saved

(Continued next page)

5. The tribulation period is a time when judgment is upon the world	The tribulation period is a time when judgment is upon the churches
6. The true believers will not experience God's judgment upon the churches because they have been raptured	The true believers will not experience God's judgment upon the churches because they are outside of the churches
7. The tribulation period is a literal seven years and is divided into two parts	The tribulation period is typified by a 70-year period and is divided into two parts
8. The tribulation period ends with the coming of Christ to this earth to reign for 1,000 years	The tribulation period ends with the coming of Christ and the end of the world

Given the fact that an understanding of the events concerning the end of the world have been sealed until the time of the end (Daniel 12:9), it is indeed amazing that the pre-mil position is as accurate as it is.

However, by God's mercy, the end of the world is very near so that we can now know with far greater accuracy the details of God's program leading up to the end of the world.

It should also be noted that heretofore, any theological position concerning details of the end of the world could be considered and accepted intellectually. And because each and every one of these positions, whether a-mil, post-mil, or pre-mil, taught that the end of the world would take place at some unknown time in the future, no action except intellectual assent on the part of the believer was required.

However, as the Biblical details of the end of the world as set forth in this study are considered, it should be emphatically noted that action on the part of the reader is required. Thus, this study should not be considered simply as an eschatological position that discusses the great event of the end of the world as an occurrence that is coming at some unknown time in the future. Rather, this study is a very carefully developed Biblical eschatological position that requires immediate decisive action on the part of the believers who understand the truth of this study and who have an intense desire to be obedient to all the commands of the Bible.

As this study will show, we are now in that time of history when the church age has come to an end. Consequently, God has commanded each and

every believer to leave his local church and continue to serve God as His ambassador outside of the churches and congregations. This is the action required by God for any and all who tremble before the Word of God.

Thus, this study will be very offensive to some readers. But it also can be a great blessing in the lives of those who will understand the Biblical truth that it sets forth.

May God have mercy on each reader of this study so that the result in his life may be a fervent readiness to do the will of Almighty God.

* * * * *

Please note that the phrase “the end of the church age” is in no way speaking of the eternal invisible church, which is made up of only truly saved individuals. The eternal church, which began when the first person in the world became saved, will continue forever. And as long as this world exists, God will be adding souls to it.

The church age that has come to an end is the external representation of the kingdom of God, which exists as local congregations. We will learn in this study that for more than 1950 years, beginning with Pentecost in A.D. 33, the external representation of the kingdom of God was the local churches and congregations. Throughout the church age, the true believers who are eternal citizens of the eternal church were to be members of these local congregations. The eternal church is an invisible church because only God knows for certain who are true believers.

Examples of these local churches or congregations are the seven churches named in Revelation Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. These congregations consisted of both saved and unsaved individuals. For example, one of these churches, the church at Sardis, had only a few believers within it (Revelation 3:4). Thus, while it was a local church that externally represented the kingdom of God on this earth, in actuality, it had only a few people who had become members of God’s eternal church.

As we will learn in this study, it is the era of all local congregations and churches that has come to an end. The true believers who are included in the memberships of these local churches either already have been driven out or they have come out of these congregations because the Word of God commands them to come out of the churches. Thus, the local churches all over the world finally will have only unsaved people as members.

However, the invisible, eternal church will continue to grow and flourish outside of these local congregations, which God had raised up and used for more than 1950 years as the divine institution that was to be the caretaker of the Gospel. Since the beginning of the Great Tribulation, the eternal church no longer has any identification with the local churches.

Therefore, an alternative title for this book could be, *The End of the Divine Institution of the Local Churches . . . and After.*

Introduction.
The Bible is the Final Authority

This book is entitled *The End of the Church Age and After*, however, the essential issue that is being presented is not the subject of the end of the church age. The essential issue is the authority of the Bible. Is the Bible the ultimate and final authority to which every true believer is subject?

The big question each one must face is: Do I have such a fear of God that I tremble before Him if I suspect a doctrine I hold may be contrary to the Word of God?

Or is it possible that I feel secure with God because I faithfully obey each and every doctrine that my church teaches. Do I realize that some of the doctrines held by my church may not be faithful to the Bible? In turn, do I trust that everything my church teaches is altogether true to the Bible?

If I discover that a doctrine my church teaches is not faithful to God's Word, do I tremble in fear?

To say it another way, if I discover that a doctrine my church teaches is not faithful to God's Word, do I tremble in fear? We must remember that any doctrine we hold that is not faithful to the Bible is a lie. It is something developed by men. Therefore, to believe that this doctrine is true, when in actuality, it is not true to the Bible, is to place our trust in men rather than in God. Actually, it is a sin equivalent to that committed by ancient Israel when they worshipped God in Jerusalem but also worshipped other gods at their high places. This was such a serious sin that God finally destroyed Israel in 709 B.C. and Judah in 587 B.C. As we will discover in this book, it is such a serious sin of our day that God's judgment is upon today's churches.

The same principle must be applied to this study. Has every effort been made to be sure that everything presented in this book is altogether faithful to the Bible? The teachings and conclusions must have nothing to do with visions or voices or dreams. The teachings and conclusions are to be unrelated to human speculation. They must be carefully founded on the Bible alone.

It must be admitted that at times, it is very difficult to obey the Bible. That is, sometimes, as we carefully read the Bible, we find that God is giving us a command to take some kind of action. And sometimes, we don't like that command. We don't like it at all. Then comes the big question that each of us must personally ask: In my fear of God, am I ready to be obedient to the command even though I don't like it? The answer has to be, "If I am a true child of God,

I want to be obedient to each and every command. My delight is to do the will of God.” If I keep hesitating to obey, I must ask myself the fair question, “Am I truly a child of God?”

The Saved Person is a New Creature

The reason why obedience is the spiritual mentality of the true believer is because at the moment he became saved, he became born again. He received from heaven above a new resurrected soul in which he never wants to sin again. In I John 3:9, God assures us of this as He declares:

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

The seed that remaineth in him is Christ (Galatians 3:16).

Therefore, the true believer has become a new creature in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17). At death, which could come moments after salvation or years after salvation, in his soul existence, he goes immediately, without any change, into heaven to live and reign with Christ. Because he was given his new resurrected soul, God can say of him in I John 2:3-4:

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

The true believer can understand Romans 7:22:

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

He is in accordance with the testimony of Romans 7:24 where we read, “**who shall deliver me from the body of this death?**” He deplores the fact that he must live in a sin-cursed body that will not be redeemed until Christ comes on the last day.

Ordination or acclaim that I am a faithful Bible teacher or elder or pastor give no guarantee that I have become saved.

Frankly stated, if a highly successful pastor or any pastor or a Biblical theologian or I do not find an intense desire in my life to be obedient to all that the Bible commands, so that I tremble before God lest I teach something con-

trary to the will of God, I may have evidence that I am not saved. Ordination or acclaim that I am a faithful Bible teacher or elder or pastor give no guarantee that I have become saved.

Unfortunately, those who are not saved may not be able to understand these truths. They may conclude that these statements concerning a new resurrected soul are merely the opinion of the writer of this study. In fact, that judgment can extend to this whole study so that the reader may conclude that this study is merely the opinion of the writer.

The best this writer can hope for is that each one who reads this book will carefully and diligently check the Bible for the validity of each conclusion that is taught in this study.

Progressive Revelation

The Bible is the complete revelation of God's Word to the human race. We are not to add to it. We are not to take away from it. It alone and in its entirety is the Word of God.

However, when we consider how we receive truth from the Bible, we have another matter altogether. God insists that there is a timetable known only to God by which He reveals the truths of the Bible to mankind. For example, Jesus clearly told His disciples that the time would come when He would be killed and after three days, He would rise again. Mark 8:31 declares:

And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Even though this is a plain, clear statement, it was not understood at all by the disciples. It was only after His resurrection, as the disciples were reminded by the two men in shining garments, who stood outside the empty sepulchre, that they understood. Luke 24:6-8 informs us:

He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words,

God had given them the revelation that Christ was to be killed and rise again, but it was not a revelation that became a part of their understanding until Christ had risen. Likewise, we read in Ephesians 3:3-5:

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may

understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

God is indicating that a mystery was made known to the Apostle Paul, **“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel”** (verse 6). However, this truth was repeatedly written about in the Bible, for example, Abram’s name was changed to Abraham because he would be the father of many nations (Genesis 17:5-7).

Many years earlier, Jesus had told the disciples in Matthew 28:19:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

The truth that those whom God would save would include people from all nations of the world is taught in many places in the Bible. But while this truth was included in God’s revelation to mankind, only when Saul of Tarsus had become saved was it truly revealed to the minds of the apostles.

The principle of progressive revelation is especially emphasized in Daniel 12, verses 8 and 9:

And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end.

God has a timetable for giving understanding of these truths.

In God’s revelation, which is the Bible, God has a great many things to say about the end of the world and about details of things that lead up to the end of the world. But God has a timetable for giving understanding of these truths. The true meaning of these end-time statements was not to be revealed to the minds of men until the time of the end. This is why many devout, God-fearing theologians of the past have endeavored to explain the meaning of Biblical end-time passages, but they did not even come close to the truth. This was not a failure on their part. It was simply not time for God to reveal the meaning of these end-time passages.

Thus, we can expect that in our day, when the signs are showing that we must be close to the end of time, the meaning of a great many Biblical passages should become revealed to the minds of careful, diligent students of

the Bible. The very fact that we can find great harmony in our understanding of Biblical passages that heretofore have been very obscure greatly encourages us that God has placed us on the right track. We can expect, therefore, that many passages of the Bible, which in earlier times have been somewhat mysterious, can now be understood.

The Bible, The Supreme Law Book

It must be emphasized that the Bible is a book of law. It is the supreme law book by which God governs all mankind. Even as each political government has written laws by which the rulers govern, so, too, God, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, has a written law by which He governs. Moreover, rulers of nations are subject to the written law of their land. So, too, God is subject to the written law, the Bible, by which He governs the nations. This principle is set forth in the language of Psalm 138:2, where we read:

I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.

We stand amazed at the idea that the Word of God is magnified according to His name. But when we understand that the Word of God is a synonym for the law of God, we learn that God, too, is subject to all the laws He has written in this law book, the Bible. In more than 170 verses of the 176 verses of Psalm 119, for example, there is a reference to words such as “law,” “precept,” “commandment,” “word,” “testimony,” “statute,” etc. Each of these words is a synonym for the word “law.” The Bible is the law book God uses to govern the nations.

The fact that the Bible is essentially a book of law is not normally apparent to the reader of the Bible. This is because God declares His laws in the context of history, in the context of examples of peoples and nations that disobeyed His laws and suffered the consequences of their sins. God’s laws are frequently hidden because God sometimes spoke utilizing metaphors and parables. But in the measure we begin to understand these obscure passages, we always find that the basic truth being brought is the law of God.

An integral part of God’s law book is the declaration of His purpose and plan to publish the teachings of His law book to all the world. Moreover, the laws that govern God’s salvation plan, a plan that is required to maintain the integrity of His law, are a most important part of God’s law.

Because God is subject to the laws set forth in the Bible, He cannot have a people for Himself eternally unless all their sins (that is, all their violations of the law of God), have been paid for, and the penalty demanded by the law has been paid. Therefore, when God the Father gave those whom He had elected for salvation to the Lord Jesus Christ (John 6:37), it meant that Christ

first had to somehow satisfy the requirements of the law of God, as it applied to these individuals, before they could be His. That is, before these individuals could be with Christ eternally, the penalty for the sins of these elect individuals had to be paid so that they could be forgiven. Christ did all this tremendous work of payment for our sins from the foundation of the world (Hebrews 4:3), and then demonstrated that payment at the cross.

Once we have learned this tremendously important principle, that the Bible is God's supreme law book, we should tremble as we read it. God, in the Bible, is constantly declaring the laws by which we are to live. Violation of His law will absolutely bring the penalty of destruction. Therefore, as we read, in the Bible, God's laws that governed the church during the church age, and that relate the end of the local church age and the final harvest, we should carefully study God's law book, the Bible, to know God's will. The seriousness of disobeying God's laws as they are set forth in His divine book, the Bible, cannot be emphasized too strongly.

Because God Himself is subject to the laws of the Bible, He must bring to completion the punishment that He has decreed for any and all human beings, even church leaders and all those in local congregations who transgress His laws.