

Will the World End on 05.21.11?

I recently 'Google'd' the phrase, "predictions for 2011". Google's search engine presented me with links to over 35 million internet sites and publications that dealt in some way with "predictions for 2011."

The first link on the list was to Fiona Anderson's December 29, 2010 article in the *Vancouver Sun*, entitled: "Predictions for 2011: Interest rates, TSX and more." Anderson's article summarized economic predictions made by experts at the Bank of Montreal (BOM) for interest rates, economic growth and the direction of the TSX in 2011. She described BMO's predictions as follows: interest rates will remain low until late spring; the economies of BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan will grow by 3.5% because of commodities sales; the US economy will recover slightly (9% unemployment, down 1% from the current 10%); and the TSX would reach 14,000 by year's end. BMO sought these predictions for 2011 so that the bank and its customers could take actions today that would lead to positive results in the future. Their advice: if you must borrow money do it now, it will cost you more in the late spring, and hold onto your stocks and buy more now because the TSX will be up next December.

Then I clicked on a series of links that really piqued my 'interest'.

These links referred to the predictions for 2011 made by a man named Harold



Camping. He predicts that Jesus will return to our world on May 21, 2011 to judge the living and the dead. This world will end and a new world will begin. Harold Camping is an 88-year old professional engineer turned Christian radio broadcaster. He established Family Radio; a network of Christian radio stations with head offices is in Oakland, California. He claims to own some 55 radio stations in the US and he

broadcasts programming on every continent of the globe.

He calculated May 21, 2011 as the date for Christ's return, based on the following assumptions and the theory that some numbers used in the Bible have special spiritual significance. The Bible places special significance on the numbers 5, 10 and 17. Camping reasoned that the number 5 is linked with atonement (payment for sin), the number 10 with completeness, and the number 17 with heaven. He

further reasoned that these numbers, and the words associated with them, describe the Gospel. The words declared that one day we will receive complete atonement from sin and the right to heaven. Complete atonement and the right to heaven occurred on Good Friday. Camping began experimenting with these numbers. He multiplied atonement (5) times completion (10) times heaven (17) for a total of 850. He then multiplied the product of $5 \times 10 \times 17$ by itself or 850×850 which equals 722,500. Camping determined that complete atonement was



May 21, 2011 Bus Bench in Colorado Springs, CO.

accomplished when Jesus hung on the cross and died April 1, 33 AD. Jesus' return and the beginning of life in heaven must occur a specified number of days after Good Friday. The number of years from April 1, 33AD to April 1, 2011 is 1,978 years. He then multiplied 1,978 years \times 365.2422 (the number of days in each solar year, not to be confused with a

calendar year). He came up with 722,449 days. If you add an additional 51 days to these 722,449 days, you get a total of 722,500 days. In Camping's mind, the conclusion is inescapable: the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is set to return a number of days after April 1, 33 AD, equal to the square of the product of the numbers for atonement (5) times, completion (10) times heaven (17) plus 51, or May 21, 2011.

Before you start taking any action, be aware that Camping made a previous prediction about Jesus' second coming. On September 6, 1994, dozens of Camping's followers gathered inside Alameda California's Veterans Memorial Building to await the return of Christ, which he predicted would occur on that date. For the two years prior to 6 September 1994, he had announced Jesus' imminent return. Jesus did not come back on that date. Camping suggested that

he may have made a mathematical error. He spent the next 10 years running new calculations for the date of the return of Jesus. He came up with May 21, 2011, and has been announcing it ever since.

What should we make of Harold Camping's predictions for Jesus' second coming? Jesus made this bold assertion about the day He would return to judge the world in the Gospel, according to St. Matthew: "Of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." (Matthew 24:36). If we take Jesus literally, no one, including Harold Camping and all those like him, can possibly know when Jesus is coming back. In addition, Moses wrote this about prophets who make predictions in God's name that do not come true: "If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him." (Deuteronomy 18:22). Camping predicted the return of Jesus in 1994 and it did not happen. Moses' advice to this generation is that we need not take him seriously in 2011.

In my mind, I had very easily put down Harold Camping and all those like him who would speak for God. However, following all my hard work debunking Camping's predictions regarding Jesus' imminent return, I experienced a still small voice that said: "Ed, there are hundreds of reasons why you should not believe Harold Camping about his prediction concerning Christ's return. However, what if you took Camping's prediction seriously for one minute? Would you live your life differently if you really believed that Jesus was coming back on May 21, 2011?"

My answer: I would! I would confess my sins to God daily. When we sin, that is, hurt one another or ourselves, we really sin against God. David confessed this to God after he committed adultery with a woman named Bathsheba and then caused her husband to be murdered. He said: "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge." (Psalm 51:4) I believe God forgives the sins of those who confess their sins to Him and believe that Jesus died as payment for their sins. I definitely would read and meditate on the Bible more. I would pray to God more. I would worship God more. I would share the Gospel more. I would attempt to reconcile with those with whom I am estranged. I would confess my role and fault in the events which caused the estrangement and ask for forgiveness. I would forgive those who have hurt me. I would ask God for the

power to stop doing the things that make me feel separated from Him. I would love people more, and money and things less. I would find it easier to share my resources and help the less fortunate with their needs. I would ask Jesus for the strength and courage to do all these things. That same still small voice asked me, "Ed, why are you not living your life this way today?"

The voice was right! "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28). God used Camping's flawed predictions to expose a flaw in me. When I put Camping's predictions down, I felt safe. Jesus' second coming was a long way off. I could put off what I would have to do if I believed the coming of Jesus was imminent. In the final analysis, as a Christian I am called to live every day as if it were the day before the day Jesus returns. Camping's predictions have spurred me to action. I pray that 2011 will be a year in which God will change me so that I will confess, study, worship, love, serve, be reconciled, forgive and be forgiven more and more. I don't want God to accomplish these things in me because I believe that Jesus will return to this world May 21, 2011; rather, it is because either I, or the ones I need to reconcile with, may leave this world and go to meet our Maker tomorrow. I urge you to do the same. May God bless you and yours in 2011 with the grace to live each day as the day before Jesus' return.

In Christ,

Pastor Ed Skutshek

[Editor's Note: Click here for some Sure-Fire Predictions for 2011:
<http://www.canadianlutheran.ca/sure-fire-predictions-for-2011/>]