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Radio host now says Judgment Day coming in October

Camping says he took refuge in a motel when his May 21 prediction didn't come



Reuters TV / Reuters
Evangelical broadcaster Harold Camping says he's "flabbergasted" his doomsday prophecy did not come true.

By **GARANCE BURKE**

 Associated Press

updated 36 minutes ago

OAKLAND, Calif.— California preacher Harold Camping said Monday his prophecy that the world would end was off by five months because Judgment Day actually will come on Oct. 21.

Camping, who predicted that 200 million Christians would be taken to heaven Saturday before the Earth was destroyed, said he felt so terrible when his doomsday prediction did not come true that he left home and took refuge in a motel with his wife. His independent ministry, Family Radio International, spent millions — some of it from donations made by

followers — on more than 5,000 billboards and 20 RVs plastered with the Judgment Day message.

But Camping said that he's now realized the apocalypse will come five months after May 21, the original date he predicted. He had earlier said Oct. 21 was when the globe would be consumed by a fireball.

Saturday was "an invisible judgment day" in which a spiritual judgment took place, he said. But the timing and the structure is the same as it has always been, he said.

"We've always said May 21 was the day, but we didn't understand altogether the spiritual meaning," he said. "May 21 is the day that Christ came and put the world under judgment."

It's not the first time the independent Christian radio host has been forced to explain when his prediction didn't come to pass. He also predicted the Apocalypse would come in 1994, but said it didn't happen then because of a mathematical error.

Rather than give his normal daily broadcast on Monday, Camping made a special statement before the press at the Oakland headquarters of the media empire that has broadcast his message. His show, "Open Forum," has for months headlined his doomsday message via

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the group's radio stations, TV channels, satellite broadcasts and website.

When the Rapture didn't arrive Saturday, crestfallen followers began turning their attention to more earthly concerns.

Jeff Hopkins had figured the gas money he spent driving back and forth from Long Island to New York City would be worth it, as long as people could see the ominous sign atop his car warning that the End of the World was nigh.

"I've been mocked and scoffed and cursed at and I've been through a lot with this lighted sign on top of my car," said Hopkins, 52, a former television producer who lives in Great River, NY. "I was doing what I've been instructed to do through the Bible, but now I've been stymied. It's like getting slapped in the face."

Camping said Family Radio would never tell anyone what they should do with their possessions.

"That is between them and God," he said.

But he said he wouldn't give away all his possessions ahead of Oct 21.

"I still have to live in a house, I still have to drive a car," he said. "What would be the value of that? If it is Judgment Day why would I give it away?"

Apocalyptic thinking has always been part of American religious life and popular culture. Teachings about the end of the world vary dramatically — even within faith traditions — about how they will occur.

Still, the overwhelming majority of Christians

reject the idea that the exact date or time of Jesus' return can be predicted.

Tim LaHaye, co-author of the best-selling "Left Behind" novels about the end times, recently called Camping's prediction "not only bizarre but 100 percent wrong!" He cited the Bible verse Matthew 24:36, "but about that day or hour no one knows" except God.

"While it may be in the near future, many signs of our times certainly indicate so, but anyone who thinks they 'know' the day and the hour is flat out wrong," LaHaye wrote on his website, leftbehind.com.

In 2009, the nonprofit Family Radio reported in IRS filings that it received \$18.3 million in donations, and had assets of more than \$104 million, including \$34 million in stocks or other publicly traded securities.

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