

Yankee Steve's Column

for Week of May 26, 2011

(written on Friday, May 20, 2011)

Not Again?

I am writing these few thoughts on Friday, May 20, 2011. Why is that important? It is significant because a number of well-intentioned evangelicals will wake tomorrow (that is if they are able to sleep) believing that Jesus Christ is returning to earth on what they think will be the Saturday to beat all Saturdays.

Jesus, they tell us, has made the date of His return known to Mr. Harold Camping [1921-], their trusted leader.

Need I tell you that at tomorrow's end some confused people will be looking for answers? I am certain that if they rise early to meet Jesus they will by mid-morning have to send out for coffee.

A number of years ago I broadcast on a radio station in West Orange, NJ, that was owned and operated by Camping. I always knew that he was a smug and terribly opinionated man, but when he announced that Jesus would come back in **1994** I realized that he had gone off the deep end. On hearing his prediction, I was glad I had moved on to other things.

It's Camping's second coming! He has revised his formula for calculating the date of the rapture (the time when Christ will catch up His church, bring in His kingdom, and judge the world.)

Now do not misunderstand me, I hope Camping is right; I would like to see Jesus. I would like to see the atheists who teach and corrupt our youth on campuses, put in their place. And I would like to see Muslims, who are still at this late hour killing Christians in Egypt, quivering in their boots. But this Saturday will not be the day when that happens. Enemies of the King won't be displaced anytime soon.

Some People Never Learn

I am certain that Camping who is just months away from becoming a nonagenarian will be able to use dementia as an explanation. Date-setters predicting the return of Christ can always provide their followers with excuses.

Camping will go back to the drawing board. He will get out his calculator. He will come up with another date.

This is what the Millerites did in 1844 when self-proclaimed prophet William Miller created quite a stir by discovering the date of Christ's return. He had only been a Christian for two years, and the date just popped out at him from the Old Testament in Book of Daniel. He didn't attend seminary to uncover the

truth about the second coming, or evidently thoroughly read the Holy Bible in which Jesus stated that no one could know the time of His return.

Now don't think that Miller only appealed to the ignorant and untutored. Miller won over some sophisticated people who believed that he knew the day in which Jesus would punch through the skies. They all gathered together on what came to be known as "The Great Disappointment." Tomorrow there will be another disappointment. History repeats itself.

The date came and went along with other dates offered by Millerites. Eventually they quit trying. However, not everyone remained disappointed, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church was born. Its founders said that Jesus had in fact done something on the prophesied date. In heaven He had begun a new ministry which dated from the day in which Miller said Jesus would return. Look, they said, we can keep our religion and we can hold on to the prognostications of William Miller at the same time.

What they wanted most of all was to live at a special time in history. And here we are given an insight into those who get caught up in Millerism and millenarianism; they are desperate to be a part of what takes place at the end of the world.

Charles Taze Russell [1852-1916] also set a date for Christ's return. The year was 1914 came and went. What to do? The false prophet and convicted perjurer took a page out of the Seventh-day Adventist playbook. Jesus had, in fact, returned, only He was invisible to us. So from 1914 onwards, these Jehovah Witnesses experienced a further degree of separation from the rest of us; they meet in "Kingdom" Halls. You may wonder why Witnesses do not salute the American flag; they believe the U.S. is a rival kingdom.

Enthusiasm

Camping is what you call an Enthusiast, a person who believes s/he is privy to special insights. Sometimes these Enthusiasts dream dreams or see visions.

What is the source of these visions? In a facetious moment, German philosopher Immanuel Kant [1742-1804] said that he knew. When an Enthusiast has digestive gas, if it moves downward it turns into a fart, but if by chance it moves upward it becomes a vision. Conclusion: We dare not trust what Enthusiasts say. The trouble with Kant was that he did not believe that the Bible contains a record of visions that originated with the Lord God.

Some Enthusiasts, the Camping kind, base their wild estimates on what appears to be a careful reading of the Bible. You say, so what, he is not doing anyone any harm. However, men like Camping are dangerous. This coming Sunday shepherds will need to go out and search for those lost followers scattered on the hillside.

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