Contemporary Comments on the Adult Sabbath School Lesson

[Title] A Brand Plucked from the Fire
[Text] Zechariah 1-3; Revelation 12:10; Exodus 3:2-14; Ephesians 2:8-10; John 14:15

Harold Camping has egg on his face—for the second time. No confessions. No apologies. Just a revision of his prediction that the world would end on May 21, 2011.

“The man who said the world was going to end appeared at his front door in Alameda a day later, very much alive but not so well. ‘It has been a really tough weekend,’ said Harold Camping, the 89-year-old fundamentalist radio preacher who convinced hundreds of his followers that the rapture would occur on Saturday at 6 p.m. Massive earthquakes would strike, he said. Believers would ascend to heaven and the rest would be left to wander a godforsaken planet until Oct. 21, when Camping promised a fiery end to the world.

“But on Sunday, almost 18 hours after he thought he'd be in heaven, there was Camping, ‘flabbergasted’ in Alameda, wearing tan slacks, a tucked-in polo shirt and a light jacket. ‘But now I have nothing else to say,’ he said, closing the door to his home. ‘I'll be back to work Monday and will say more then.’”

Listeners of Camping have mixed comments to make. Some say they didn’t fully believe him. Others feel he simply made a mistake. Still others felt duped. One blogger said Camping “twisted” God’s word by attempting to predict the end. “He’s in big trouble with God,” she said. Then there are those who feel Camping gave Christianity a bad name. They believe his false prophetic statements have a negative impact on religion. It gives those who hate Christianity reason to hate it more.

In our Sabbath school lesson this week we read the vision that Zechariah had of Joshua the High Priest. Joshua stands as a representative of God’s people. He wears filthy garments. Judah had sinned and went into captivity. But the people repented and confessed their wrong. God sees their broken hearts and removes from Joshua the filthy garments and clothes him in clean garments. Joshua (Judah) is restored.

So, how did Harold Camping repent? The AP gives his response. “The globe will be completely destroyed in five months, he said, when the apocalypse comes. But because God's judgment and salvation were completed on Saturday, there's no point in continuing to warn people about it, so his network will now just play Christian music and programs until the final end on Oct. 21.”

That’s it?
Zechariah writes, “Return to me,” declares the Lord Almighty, “and I will return to you…” (Zechariah 1:3). Verse 6 simply puts it, “Then they repented…”

Harold Camping owes us an apology. The Christian community, his followers, and all who listened to his prediction need to hear, “I was wrong,” not, “Let’s make a little modification here.” Joshua was clothed in a clean garment because of a complete repentance. Harold could learn from Zechariah’s vision.

~ct
1. SF Gate
2. Associated Press

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