

Fanning it into Flame
Sunday, May 22, 2011
Preparing for the Rapture

This past week was buzzing with late night comedian's jokes as well as news commentator's sound bytes over Harold Camping of Family Radio and his prediction that the Rapture of the Church was going to take place on Saturday, May 21st. This was not Mr. Camping's first stab at this. He had predicted it in 1994. While some of what he said was true about the rapture, it's sad that the Church of Jesus Christ has had to take a hit with yet another very public demonstration of looking like fools. God does tell us in his word that there is going to be a rapture. There is going to be a final judgment, a new heavens and a new earth, and that real Christians are not to worry. **1 Thessalonians 5:9 (NIV)** ⁹ *For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.* We are not going to be surprised in the same way as the rest of the world. God will let us know what we need to know when we need to know it. I don't believe we are to try to find hidden clues to something that Jesus said that he did not know, nor the angels in Heaven, but only Father.

In 30 years of pastoral ministry, I don't think I ever dedicated an entire message on the rapture of the church or end time speculations and this will be no exception. The heart of my ministry has been teaching and encouraging us to live our lives the way Jesus taught us to. My thought has been that if we are putting our trust in the Lord and walking in intimate fellowship with him and one another, we can't go wrong. Peter goes into some detail in his second letter regarding "scoffers" who want to put Christians down for their faith saying, *"Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."* Peter gives some explanation and adds a couple of interesting things. First, that God is not slow in keeping his promise. His reason for the delay is that he doesn't want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. Then he says in **2 Peter 3:11, 12 (NIV)** ¹¹ *Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives* ¹² *as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.* We are to think about the way we live and make sure that it is holy and godly. But what does it mean to be "holy" and "godly?" It's not to be in some performance oriented introspection as if what we do scores points with God. Rather, it's in our personal relationship with the Lord. He is our righteousness. When we receive Christ as savior and Lord, we have clothed ourselves with Christ. He is now our life. His righteousness is our righteousness. His life is our life. We get the mind of Christ and we become heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. We are changed into a new creation with the past all but a memory. Jesus, who is love, is resident in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We think differently. We have new desires and a new mindset. I like the other thing Peter said. We look forward to the day of God and *speed its coming.*

How can we possibly speed the coming of the Lord? Isn't it a set day in history? Isn't it predetermined? Here's what I believe. The end will not come until God knows that nothing else can be done to get anyone else saved. We are to live our lives filled with the Spirit of God, loving the people around us with God's love and setting an example that the Christian life is the most awesome life that can be lived. Our lives should be so filled with joy, excitement, and anticipation of good things to come that people will want to stand in line to find out how we got so vibrant. We are not to sit around waiting to get saved from this "God-forsaken world." We are to partner with the King of Glory and become the Sons of God that earth has been groaning for. We are to be proactive in the redemption of mankind. Get it straight! God loves people and he is in the business of saving sinners. We need to be in the family business. **John 14:12-15 (NIV)** ¹² *I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.* ¹³ *And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.* ¹⁴ *You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.* ¹⁵ **"If you love me, you will obey what I command.** **John 15:7,8 (NIV)** ⁷ *If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.* ⁸ *This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.* The command he gave us is very simple: **LOVE ONE ANOTHER!** Let Christ's love flow in us and through us and we'll be ready for the rapture. Paul says in Galatians that the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. Amen!