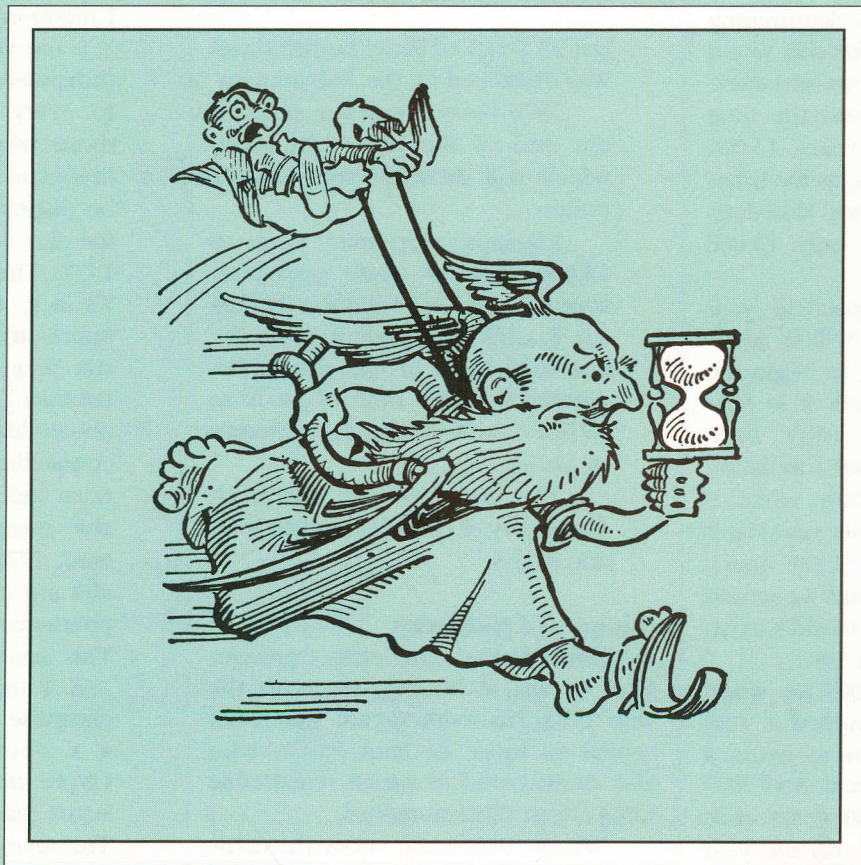


The Slippery Dip of Date-Setting:

A BOOK REVIEW OF
HAROLD CAMPING'S *1994?*
—PART TWO



by Desmond Ford

*Fixing a date for the return of Christ goes
against our Lord's warnings. It also plays
silly games with Bible numbers.*

Just how does Mr. Camping arrive at his date of 1994? Surprisingly, he has many ways of reaching this number. We are reminded of the old saying that "Figures lie, and liars figure."

Not that Mr. Camping is a liar. He is a fine Christian. Many are indebted to him because of his life of dedication to Christ. Nonetheless, the first half of the saying is true: "Figures lie." In the United States alone, there are certainly many million examples of this at tax time!

Camping Chronology

We will let Mr. Camping speak for himself:

If, therefore, God is determining the bounds of time for this world by the number of tribes [of Israel], then one would expect the time duration to be 1300 years, 13,000 years, or 130,000 years, as the tribes were thirteen in number. However, as this study shows only 13,000 years is possible....

... we would expect the year 1988, which is the 13,000th anniversary of the world, to begin the final tribulation spoken of in Matthew 24:15-29. We know from Daniel 8 that the final tribulation period will be 2300 days, which is six years. Therefore, six years later than 1988 (actually 2300 days), Christ would return and we would be at the end of this world's existence. That is the year 1994....

So we see that 2007 B.C. when Jacob was born is indeed a very significant day insofar as being a beginning for 4000 years. And 2007 B.C. followed by 4000 years ends on—yes, that's right—on the year 1994 A.D....

Returning now to Daniel 12:11, do you recall that God declared that from the taking away of the continual and the abomination that makes desolate there would be 1290 days. Employing a year for a day as instructed in Ezekiel 4 and seeing the pattern of the one-to-three relationship we have seen a very precise path from the time of Israel's entering into Egypt until the end of Israel in 587 B.C. and the end of the church age when Christ returns in 1994 A.D.

1877 - 1447	= 430 years
3 x 430	= 1290 years
1877 - 587	= 1290 years
3 x 1290	= 3870 years
1877 B.C. - 1994 A.D.	= 3870 years
430 years is the end of the Egyptian bondage	
1290 years is the end of the	

"It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority."

last 23 years of Israel before Israel was destroyed by the Babylonians 3870 years appears to point to the end of the final tribulation, which will coincide with Christ's return....

Jehoiada's 130 years point to 13,000 years of God's protection over His people, 11,013 B.C. to 1994 A.D. Joash's forty years point to the last 4000 years of the church beginning with the birth of Jacob in 2007 B.C. and ending at the return of Christ, 1994 A.D....

The year 1994 A.D. will mark 4000 years of conflict between Jews and Arabs.¹

Dangers of Numerics

Mr. Camping has many other examples that, by his reckoning, reach to the year 1994. His methods are somewhat similar to those of Ivan Panin, who also endeavored to prove remarkable things from Bible numerics.

When Professor Oswald Ellis wished to warn his readers about the dangers implicit in such methods, he offered some interesting statistics. We think they carry as equal a warning against Mr. Camping as they do against Ivan Panin.

Figures are both interesting and fascinating. The almost infinite variety of permutations and combinations which can be made with ten simple numerical signs (0 to 9) is amazing and seems incredible. The ignorant count laboriously on their fingers; the astronomer speaks learnedly in terms of

"light years." Symmetrical designs can be found in nature or constructed by art which have beautiful and wonderful numerical values. Snow crystals are a remarkable example of this. It is no wonder that the Pythagoreans, centuries before our era, attached especial importance to the study of numbers and sought to determine their deeper meanings and harmonies, or that the Jewish Rabbis display in Talmud and Kabbala a similar interest in Numerics (Gematria).

Numbers, like names, acquire significance because of what they represent. 1776 is such a number. I mention it because of its sevens. It is the year of the Declaration of Independence, a memorable event to every patriotic American. So those who are interested in Numerics as well as in history may be disposed to seek a reason that the date was 1776 and not 1775 or 1777. The number 1776 has two 7's in it. Add the first and the last figures together (1+6) and the result is a third 7. 777 is 7 x 111. Subtract 777 from 1776 and the remainder is 999. 777 and 999 in connection with 1776 look mysterious and significant. Other remarkable things can easily be discovered. 1776 is 4 x 444. So 444, 777, 999 are all concealed in it. Independence Day is the 4th of July. This accounts for the 4. 4 is also 1+3. 1 and 3 are the figures which compose 13. So each of the 4's in 4 x 444 may be regarded as a cryptic reminder of the 13 colony-states that ratified the Declaration. The reverse of 13 is 31. The Declaration was signed in July which has 31 days. If 444 is subtracted from 1776, the remainder is 1332 from which 333 can be formed just as 777 is formed from 1776. These three 3's in 333 and the 3 identical numbers in 999, 777, 444, 333, all serve to remind us that the monarch of whose misrule the Declaration was an indictment was George the Third. And so on *ad infinitum*. All of which "facts" lead inevitably to the conclusion that 1776 is a very remarkable number. Q.E.D. So reasons the numericist!...

We shall confine ourselves to a single pattern of alleged numerical structure. Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," having 7 words and 28 (7x4) letters is regarded as a striking example of heptadic structure. Since this discussion was begun with an examination of the date number 1776, we will turn first to the Declaration of Independence. The opening words of this famous document are "When in the course of human events" (probably relatively few Americans can repeat it *verbatim* much farther than this). Here we have 7 words and 28 letters! We turn next to the Constitution of the United States. It begins with the words "We the people of the United States"—also 7 words and 28 letters! This may seem striking and significant, as if intended to indicate at the very outset the great importance of these documents. But let us look a little further. In Bancroft's *History* we run across these words: "Such was the counsel of John Adams" (Vol. viii. p. 37). This sentence is not written in italics. It is not especially emphatic. But it likewise has 7 words and 28 letters!

Let us now turn to every-day life. Such sentences as the following are not at all extraordinary. We have all used them or sentences very like them. "We had tea and toast for breakfast"; "They have not had their dinner yet"; "They had bread and milk for supper"; "Will you please pass me the butter?"; "I would like another cup of coffee"; "Hurry, girls, or we'll miss the train"; "The train started as we got aboard"; "Their silly talk bored me to death"; "I enjoyed every minute of the time." And so on. Every one of these sentences has 7 words and 28 letters! Does that fact have the slightest significance? Does it add anything to their meaning? Does it account in any way for their use? Did anyone, unless he was playing a game of logomachy or working out a problem in gematria, ever count them to determine their numerical structure? Such questions answer them-

selves.²

While Allis is dealing primarily with numerics, what he says has relevance to all systems that try (like Mr. Camping's) to find wonderful things in historical dates and time periods.

Not only are the dates disputable in many cases. The application made of them is even more so.

Camping Conclusions

Now let me offer you Mr. Camping's conclusions:

To summarize our conclusions we can be fairly sure of the following:

1. The last day cannot be earlier than the Jubilee day, called the Day of Atonement, which occurs September 15, 1994.
2. The last day will probably not take place later than September 27, which is the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles of 1994.
3. The last day could possibly take place any time between September 15 and September 27, 1994.
4. Even though we have abundant evidence that in all likelihood the last day will occur in 1994, we definitely cannot know the day nor the hour of our Savior's return.³

Warnings Against Date-Setting

Even the caveat Mr. Camping offers in his point four is inadequate to justify his repeated transgression of the spirit of our Savior's warning. "But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mt 24:36 NRSV).

"Writing a book on the timing of Christ's return and the end of the world is a difficult and dangerous task."

"It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1:7 NRSV).

We close with the same warning in the words of another:

Writing a book on the timing of Christ's return and the end of the world is a difficult and dan-

gerous task. Anyone who dares to write such a book should do so with great fear and trepidation.

This is true because every attempt to do so (and there have been many attempts), has proven to be futile. Each predicted date passed by and the world continues to exist right up to the present day. Thus the prophets who made the predictions have been shown to be without authority and without wisdom. Fact is, they may have become the laughingstock of those who never trusted their prognostications in the first place.

Peoples' lives can be seriously affected by such predictions. There have been those who have sold their homes and businesses in anticipation of the end of the world. (Although one wonders about the value of such activity when it is realized that upon Christ's return this world will be destroyed by fire. Thus our possessions, whether they are money or property, will be totally consumed.) Nevertheless, the blind followers of blind prophets, who dared to give a date for the end of the world, have frequently been seriously hurt by such forecasts.

The most important problem that must be faced by anyone who dares to suggest that he knows the timing of Christ's return is the warning of Scripture. In the Bible, God emphasizes that, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man" (Matt. 24:36). Also, in Acts 1:7, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons." These are God's statements that must be viewed as being absolutely authoritative.⁴

Who wrote these wise words of counsel? Mr. Harold Camping!

Where are they found?

In his new book, *1994?* ❖

Footnotes

1. Harold Camping, *1994?* Vantage Press, NY, 1992, pages 440, 444, 457, 470, 474, 480.
2. Oswald Thompson Allis, *Bible Numerics*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., USA, 1973, pp. 3-4, 23-24.
3. Harold Camping, *1994?* p. 525.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 311-312.