

Four Questions on the End of the Church Age

By Zin Yi

All scriptural emphases have been added.
Personal references have been deleted to preserve privacy.
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Hello Zin Yi of <http://www.goodmessage.org>

I have read some of the information on your web site...I am very disappointed about what Harold Camping is doing. He is continuing to ship wreck what was once a very fruitful ministry. You folks seem to be in agreement with Mr. Camping, so I will put some questions to you about this strange doctrine that he has been teaching - that the church age is over. ...Please answer these questions - and give sound biblical answers (if you have them) to these simple questions.

Thank you.

I am sorry to hear that you are upset with this teaching. I am personally aware of others who have also reacted similarly to the teaching on the end of the church age.

However, I am not in the marketplace with the intent to defend Mr. Camping, nor am I in any official way affiliated with FR (Family Radio). You see, you have asked a non-FR ministry to speak for Mr. Camping. If Mr. Camping's position is what you are interested in, I am sure you can understand that all I can suggest is that you begin listening to FR again. If, however, you are interested in what the Bible says, then maybe the Lord would allow our dialogue to be mutually beneficial. The best I can do, as the Lord leads, is to share what I believe, according to what the Lord has taught me from His perfect word.

Q1. Mr. Camping advocates that believers should leave their respective churches because the "abomination of desolations" has arrived. He says that we should stop obeying the leaders of these churches (pastors, elders and deacons) because they no longer have authority in the church. Please show me in the scriptures where it says that the leadership that Christ ordained (elders and deacons) would one day be abolished before He returns.

The Bible is very clear in its perfect record of many instances of God's judgment: it commences suddenly (Ecc. 9:12; Jer. 6:26; Matt. 24:39; 1 Thess. 5:3), yet does *not* end in a flash (cf. 1 Sam. 25:37, 38; Is. 24:21-23; Jer. 4:27). This was the case with Noah's flood (Gen. 7:4, 12, 17), the destruction of Israel (Is. 8:7, 8) and Judah (Jer. 25:11, 12), and now, in our day, the judgment on the N. T. churches and congregations (Jer. 25:29; Ezek. 9:4-6; 1 Pet. 4:17). Even the Lord Jesus' suffering was not accomplished in the blink of an eye. His unimaginable torments began Thursday evening in Gethsemane, and it was not until Friday, after the "ninth hour," when our Savior finally uttered the words, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

We must note the important fact that the two witnesses, who identify as the "two olive trees," "two candlesticks" (Rev. 11:4), finish their "testimony," then are "killed" (Rev. 11:7) - this takes place *before* their bodies "lie in the street" for "three days and a half" (vv. 8, 9), *before* they stand on their feet once again (v. 11). This is teaching the fact that there comes a time when the witness of the Gospel, the Law and the Prophets (Moses and Elijah), via the means of the candlesticks, the churches and congregations, ceases. **YES**, these would be events taking place *before* the Last Day. We can know this because of the biblical language that describes the loosing of Satan - which coincides with the finishing of the testimony of the witnesses - followed by a *period of time* when he is to wreak havoc in the visible assembly:

And...came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great...even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered. Then I heard one saint speaking,

and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, **How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?** And he said unto me, **Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.** Dan. 8:9-14

And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, **there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.** Dan. 12:11

And **he opened the bottomless pit;** and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and **unto them was given power,** as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should **not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months:** and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. Rev. 9:2-5

And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and **power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.** And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. **And it was given unto him to make war with the saints,** and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. Rev. 13:5-7

And when they [the two witnesses] shall have **finished their testimony,** the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make **war** against them, and shall **overcome** them, and **kill** them...The **second** woe is past; and, behold, the **third** woe cometh quickly. Rev. 11:7, 14

Furthermore, the Bible does teach that the time of the great tribulation is characterized by the man of sin (2 Thess. 2:3), Satan, sitting and ruling in the "congregation" (Is. 14:13; 2 Thess. 2:4). This effectively renders **all** that identifies with the "holy place" *unholy* (1 Cor. 5:6; Jas. 3:5, 6); it can no

longer be deemed to have any God-appointed authority. This is in one sense very similar to understanding that the edict of Rev. 22:18 & 19, while not explicitly stating thus, does clearly mean that God will no longer reveal Himself or His will to man *outside* of the written word. The phenomena of tongues, visions, dreams, healings, etc., could be individually brought up and argued for by the proponents of present-day signs and wonders, but we correctly understand that **all** such phenomena is to be no longer, being covered under the umbrella of "not adding," and any claim for such is in direct rebellion against God and His expressed will: **all** such happenings, in all their varied manifestations, are simply no longer of God.

So too, God's judgment has come upon the churches, as a singular, collective entity, via the enemy, the Devil - and this has come to be *prior* to the Last Day. **All** that identifies with the visible church, including the ordained offices of Deacons and Elders (Overseers or Bishops, Acts 20:17, 28) as well as the ceremonial laws of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, thus, are no longer to be:

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning **Judah** and **Jerusalem**...The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but **Israel** doth not know, **my people** doth not consider...the **whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.** Is. 1:1a, 3, 5b, 6

And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even **the whole seed of Ephraim.** Jer. 7:15

For the time is come that judgment must begin at **the house of God:** 1 Pet. 4:17a

Nevertheless, God does focus on the sins of those who are the teachers of His word, the shepherds of the visible assembly - indeed, the Elders and Deacons of our day. These are they who are first accountable before Him, and who surely come under God's judgment along with the whole of the assembly:

And I brought you into a plentiful country...but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination. The **PRIESTS** said not, Where is the LORD? and **they that**

handle the law knew me not: the PASTORS also transgressed against me, and the PROPHETS prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit. Jer 2:7, 8

Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, **I am against the SHEPHERDS**; and I will require my flock at their hand, and **cause them to CEASE from feeding the flock**...for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. Ezek. 34:10

Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel **head and tail**, branch and rush, in one day. The **ANCIENT and HONOURABLE**, he is the **head**; and the **PROPHET that teacheth lies**, he is the **tail**. For the **LEADERS of this people cause them to err**; and **they that are led of them are destroyed**. Is. 9:14-16

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall **grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.** Acts 20:28-30

But there were false prophets also among the people, **even as there shall be FALSE TEACHERS among you**, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves **swift destruction**. And **many shall follow** their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of...**whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.** 2 Pet. 2:1-3

Q2. Mr. Camping says that we should no longer observe the Lord's supper and baptism. Please also show in the scriptures where this is to be abolished.

Much of this question has already been addressed – God's judgment on the visible church is real, and comprehensive. Thus, all that constitutes the corporate, external representation of the eternal body is no longer. Again, this is very much akin to the issue of ongoing, supernatural revelation from God – the principle applies to all possibilities, all manifestations. One cannot acquiesce before the

biblical teaching of the cessation of “tongues,” yet hold forth that dreams from God are still valid.

However, let us make one more point here. There were no verses in the Old Testament canon, which, in simple terms, stated that the temple worship would one day be abolished, or that the priesthood would be no longer recognized of God. Nevertheless, it is a biblical fact that Babylon came into the gates of Jerusalem, and carried away captive her inhabitants (Lam. 4:12).

As mentioned earlier, however, there were verses which *did* teach that there would be sweeping, across-the-board judgment upon those who were called by God's name (1 Kin. 8:43; Dan. 9:19), Israel and Judah. Since the Jews were what we would call a church-state, their national destruction is exactly equivalent to their destruction as a religious entity. The Levites, as a simple example, were chosen of God for the specific purpose of serving in the tabernacle:

Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation **before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle.** Num 3:6, 7

This is it that belongeth unto the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to wait upon the **service of the tabernacle of the congregation:** Num 8:24

Therefore, through language that teaches that the Temple itself was destroyed, utterly defiled, God makes clear that **all** religious activities related to the Temple in Jerusalem came to an abrupt halt:

And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that **Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came**, he, and all his host, **against Jerusalem**, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about...And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto **Jerusalem**: And he **burnt the house of the LORD**, and the **king's house**, and **all** the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire. And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, **brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.** 2 Kings 25:1, 8-10

And the pillars of brass that were in the **HOUSE of the LORD**, and the bases, and the brasen sea that was in the **house of the LORD**, did the Chaldees **break in pieces**, and **carried the brass of them to Babylon**. And the pots, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the spoons, and **ALL the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away**. And the firepans, and the bowls, and such things as were of gold, in gold, and of silver, in silver, the captain of the guard **took away**...And the captain of the guard took **Seraiah the CHIEF PRIEST**, and **Zephaniah the second priest**, and the three keepers of the door...And Nebuzaradan captain of the guard took these, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah: And the **king of Babylon smote them**, and **slew them** at Riblah in the land of Hamath. **So Judah was carried away out of their land**. 2 Kings 25:13-15, 18, 20, 21

These were surely catastrophic times for Judah, and especially for those who knew the Word of God. After all, God had *clearly* indicated that many of the religious activities He Himself had ordained were those that had to be performed regularly, and without end – i.e., “perpetually”:

And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a **perpetual incense** before the LORD **throughout your generations**. Ex 30:8

And the fire upon the altar shall be burning in it; **it shall not be put out**: and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order upon it; and he shall burn thereon the fat of the peace offerings. **The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out**. Lev. 6:12, 13

Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the **lamps to burn continually**. Without the vail of the testimony, in the **tabernacle of the congregation**, shall Aaron order it from the evening unto the morning before the LORD **continually**: it shall be a **statute for ever in your generations**. He shall order the lamps upon the pure candlestick before the LORD **continually**. Lev. 24:2-4

With the Babylonian invasion and the utter destruction of the Temple in 587 BC - a direct expression of God’s judgment upon His people - no longer could these explicit, clear commands of God be obeyed within the setting of the Temple in Jerusalem, the House of God. God Himself brought about conditions that made the observance of these ceremonial laws impossible. So too, today, God clearly indicates that he has loosed Satan, and has allowed Him to desecrate the churches and congregations (Dan. 8:9-11), rendering the whole institution of the visible church a cursed entity from which His children are commanded to “come out” (Rev. 18:4). God has utterly judged the “places of the assembly.” The “little leaven,” indeed, has leavened the “whole lump”:

And He [God] hath **violently taken away his tabernacle**...he hath **destroyed his places of the assembly**: the **LORD hath caused the SOLEMN FEASTS and SABBATHS to be FORGOTTEN in Zion**, and hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest. Lam. 2:6

Q3. He advocates forming fellowships (sounds a lot like what the forerunners of the Jehovah witnesses did once) of believers. These, in my view, are just churches (congregations) by another name. What does the word church mean in the Bible? Look it up (ekklesia). It simply means, the called out ones (i.e., believers). Or "popular meeting, especially a religious congregation". So what Mr. Camping is asking us to do is not to simply "leave" our church, but leave it and form another. Whenever you have believers meeting together - that is the church (MT 18:20). What Biblical authority does Mr. Camping use to support this?

The Bible teaches very clearly that both the visible assembly, as well as the invisible, eternal assembly, are entities which are instituted upon God’s own set of rules, and are identified by God-ordained, God-appointed characteristics. They are not indefinable, ambiguous, mystical agglomerations whose structure and shape are left to our speculations.

We have already discussed the fact that for the visible assembly of the O. T. era, a particular group, the sons of Levi, was chosen, and consecrated of God for the service of the tabernacle. This appointment was no light thing:

Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath **separated** you from the

congregation of Israel, to **bring you near** to himself to do the **service of the tabernacle** of the LORD, and to **stand before the congregation to minister unto them?** Num 16:9

Indeed, the whole of nation of Israel was instituted of God according to a clear set of rules. The construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness, and as well the temple in Jerusalem, as wonderful examples, were according to the most specific design on God's part:

...priests that offer gifts according to the law...serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, **as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle:** for, See, saith He, **that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.** Heb. 8:4b, 5

Such meticulousness in the design of the temple to properly reflect the Gospel picture is also found in how an individual became a part of Israel. A non-Jew could not become a part of the commonwealth simply by association, or by claiming piety for the God of Israel. Chiefly, the sign of circumcision was to be given as an external sign that unequivocally delineated and distinguished the Jew from a Gentile.

This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; **Every man child among you shall be circumcised...**and it shall be a **token** of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, **every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.** He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, **must needs be circumcised:** and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. **And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people;** he hath broken my covenant. Gen. 17:10-14

So too, for the N. T. era, God put forth not only the definite command that Elders and Deacons were to be ordained, appointed (like the establishment of the priesthood which consecrated the sons of Levi), but also their clear qualifications (* For further discussion on the biblical truth that the external assemblies of both the Old and New Testament eras, their ceremonial signs and the offices, are shadows

and types of the eternal, please refer to the following recorded Paltalk studies, 07/06/02 and 10/01/02, at http://goodmessage.org/Scripts/Job1/SSG-WNY/2002_PT_Open%20Forum/PalTalk%20Open%20Forum.html):

And when they had ordained them **elders in every church....** Acts 14:23a

And from Miletus he sent to **Ephesus**, and called the **elders of the church.** Acts 20:17

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and **ordain elders in every city**, as I had appointed thee: **If any be** blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children **not** accused of riot or unruly. For a **bishop must be** blameless, as the steward of God; **not** selfwilled, **not** soon angry, **not** given to wine, **no** striker, **not** given to filthy lucre; **But** a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, **that he may be able** by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. Tit. 1:5-9 (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1-13, 2 Tim. 2:24, 25)

Furthermore, for the N. T. congregation, it was the external sign of water baptism that was to be administered, in place of circumcision. Nevertheless this ceremonial sign served to externally delineate those belonging to a congregation, from those "without":

...Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid **water**, that these should not be **baptized**, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he **commanded them to be baptized** in the name of the Lord.... Acts 10:46b-48a

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. **And when she was baptized, and her household....** Acts 16:14

Returning to the O. T., do you recall the notable sin the two kings, Saul and Uzziah, committed? They made the very serious mistake of thinking anyone could perform the duties strictly relegated to the Levites:

And he [Saul] tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but

Samuel came not to Gilgal...And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. **And he [Saul] offered the burnt offering.** And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him...**And Samuel said, What hast thou done?** 1 Sam. 13:8-11a

And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, **It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense:** go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed...Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar. 2Ch 26:18, 19

This the clear diversification of offices and their respective roles is also paralleled in the way God structured the N. T. visible assembly:

For as we have **many members in one body,** and **all members have not the same office**...Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether **prophecy**, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or **ministry**, let us wait on our ministering: or he that **teacheth**, on teaching; Or he that **exhorteth**, on exhortation: he that **giveth**, let him do it with simplicity; he that **ruleth**, with diligence; he that **sheweth mercy**, with cheerfulness. Rom. 12:4, 6-8

And God hath set some in the church, first **apostles**, secondarily **prophets**, thirdly **teachers**, after that **miracles**, then gifts of **healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.** Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? 1 Cor. 12:28-30

This is a true saying, If a man desire the **office of a bishop**, he desireth a good work...Likewise must the deacons be grave...And let these also first be proved; then let them use the **office of a deacon**, being found blameless. 1 Tim. 3:1, 8a, 10

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man **speak**, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man **minister**, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Pet. 4:10, 11

Therefore, with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, foreseen already in John 20:22, the N. T. church era - that great era during which the Holy Spirit would actively operate "in the midst" (Mt. 18:20) of those who "nameth the name of Christ" (2 Tim. 2:20; cf. Mt. 18:20) - officially commenced. The Holy Spirit's being "in the midst" is language that describes the Holy Spirit's *positional relationship* to the visible assembly. It is directly akin to God's nearness to Israel (Num. 14:14), most prominently demonstrated in His visible identification with that "church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38), demonstrated in signs and wonders (Ps. 78:11-29).

Furthermore, God had warned that the time would come when His positional intimacy with the visible assembly of the O. T. era would come to an end, and that this would coincide with the beginning of His judgment on His people. Indeed, near the end of Judah's existence, we learn that God had always identified with His people in this manner - we are not to think that God's presence "in the midst" is something unique to the N. T. churches and congregations:

For what nation is there so great, who hath **God so nigh unto them**, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? Deut. 4:7

Yet **Thou** in Thy manifold mercies **forsookest them not** in the wilderness: **the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day**, to lead them in the way; **neither the pillar of fire by night**, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go. **Thou gavest also thy GOOD SPIRIT to instruct them**, and withheldest not Thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. Neh. 9:19, 20

...Thou, O LORD, **art in the midst of us**, and we are **called by Thy name; leave us not.** Jer. 14:9b

His being “in the midst” of those gathered in His name, thus, indicates God’s guidance over and usage of the visible assembly for the direct purpose of sending forth the Gospel. It also meant that during the church era, He would maintain His identification with them. The language of Mt. 18:20, thus, does *not* in any way *define* for us what the visible body of Christ might be. For this information, we must turn elsewhere, to those passages that clearly define the God-established structure of the N. T. visible assembly, discussed heretofore [**By the way, you seem to agree with this, as you properly define the local congregation by referring to the presence of elders and deacons in Q’s 1 & 4**]. In this vein, it is significant that God uses the expression, “whole church” (Acts 5:11, 15:22), and especially emphasizes this in the setting of 1 Corinthians 14:

If therefore the **whole church** be **come together** into **one place**.... 1Co 14:23

Furthermore, between 1 Cor. 11:17 and 1 Cor. 14:26, God employs the word, *sunerchomai* (“come together”) no less than eight times, and in each case, the setting is clearly that of the Corinthian assembly coming together in the name of Christ, with the intent to participate in a formal ecclesiastical activity: the first six occurrences are in the setting of the ceremony of the Lord’s Supper (cf. 11:20), and the last two, in the context of full, congregational worship, with “elders” (Acts 14:23, 20:17; Tit. 1:5), men, women (14:34, 35), plurality of teachers (14:26-31), and with potential for even the inclusion of unbelieving, first time visitors (14:23-25).

In addition, the epistle to Titus expands the full scope of the “whole church” mentioned in 1 Cor. 14 to include the “aged men” (Tit. 1:2), “aged women” (v. 3), “young women” (v. 4), “young men” (v. 6), and even the “servants” [slaves] (v. 9; cf. Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22; 1 Tim. 6:1; Phm. 1:10-17). 1 Tim. 5 introduces also the widows, both the true (“widows indeed,” vv. 3, 5), as well as the “younger” (v. 11-13). And yes, children were also particularly addressed in the epistle to the church at Ephesus as well as that to the church at Colossae (Col. 3:20). They are mentioned in a list which, like in Titus and in 1 John 2:12-14, covers several of the social and familial designations that could apply to many in any given congregation:

Wives...Husbands...Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)...fathers...Servants...masters....

Eph. 5:22, 25, 6:1, 2, 4, 5, 9

The O. T. precedents confirm this our understanding of the “whole church,” for example, as we witness the Passover ceremony being instituted:

Speak ye unto **all the congregation of Israel**, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, **a lamb for an house**: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the **number of the souls**; **every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb**. Ex. 12:3, 4

As the N. T. ceremonial sign of Baptism was applied to the whole house, that is, the family unit (Acts 16:15; 1 Cor. 1:15), regardless of actual, individual spiritual condition, so too, the Passover was to be that God-ordained activity in which the whole of the household partook (as signs, however, let us remember that circumcision corresponds to that of water baptism, and the Passover with the Lord’s Supper):

...it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD’S passover, who **passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt**, when he smote the Egyptians, and **delivered our houses**.... Ex. 12:26, 27

All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. Ex. 12:48

Not only was “all the congregation of Israel” present in the observance of the Passover, but as well in the reading of the Law, and public prayer – two activities centrally identified with worship:

When **all Israel** is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before **all Israel** in their hearing. **Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates**, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: Deut 31:11, 12

And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD **in the presence of all the congregation of**

Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven:
1 Kings 8:22

And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. And Jehoshaphat stood in the **congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD**, before the new court...And **all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.** 2 Chr. 20:3-5, 13

Therefore, it is in the clear setting of “the whole church” coming together “into one place” (1 Cor. 14:23) that God injects the rules of conduct for the participants, especially those who would be teaching as well as the women:

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation...**If any man speak** in an unknown tongue, let it be by **two**, or at the most by **three**, and that **by course**; and **let one interpret**. But **if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church**; and let him speak to himself, and to God. **Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.** For ye may all prophesy **one by one**, that all may learn, and all may be comforted...**Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak**; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. **And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church...**Let **all things be done decently and in order.** 1 Cor. 14:26-31, 34, 35, 40

It is this “midst,” this assembly, this structured body of those who identify with God, in which God would operate throughout both the Old Testament as well as the New Testament church eras. *This is exactly the reason why*, as God begins to judge the visible assembly, He removes His presence from the midst – the candlestick has been removed “out of his place” (Rev. 2:5), the testimony is finished. In this His detaching of Himself from the visible body, His terminating the external identification the church once enjoyed with Him, God is plainly declaring the fact that *He* no longer recognizes *them*, the churches

and congregations, as that institution He would work through for the purpose of evangelizing the world.

From all that we have thus far seen, the Bible would not at all allow for the understanding that a fellowship, which has come to be in the believers’ obedience to God’s command to “depart out” of the “midst” (the examples of which are sprinkled across the United States today, and as well in a few other places), is in any sense that God-ordained, God-structured institution we have always known as the New Testament church.

Having looked at some ways by which the bible defines the character and nature of the corporate, visible assembly, let us now investigate one aspect of God’s judgment upon it. The Bible clearly teaches that as God first gave the warning, then followed with His departure from Israel, so too, in our time, God would remove Himself from the very midst of the assembly that is called by His name:

And the LORD said unto Moses...this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land...and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and **I will forsake them**, and **I will hide my face from them**, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, **Are not these evils come upon us, because OUR GOD IS NOT AMONG US?** Deut. 32:16, 17

He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the **house of Israel** committeth here, **that I SHOULD GO FAR OFF FROM MY SANCTUARY?** but turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations. Ezek. 8:6

They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins...**yea, woe also to them WHEN I DEPART FROM THEM!** Hos. 9:9, 12

...for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God...And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only **he who now**

letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way [*mesos*, midst]. 2 Thess. 2:3, 4, 6, 7

In fact, God teaches that the place He had occupied in the midst of the assembly will now be given to another. This surprising truth is seen in the destruction of Judah, as we find God being on the side of Babylon His “hammer” (Jer. 50:23), and allowing that heathen nation to come into the “midst” of Jerusalem:

Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and **I will assemble them into the midst of this city.** Jer 21:4

In the N. T. era, it is Satan who is loosed of God Himself, and allowed to enter the visible assembly:

...the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that **he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.**
2 Thess. 2:3, 4

The expression, “all that that is called God” of 2 Thessalonians 2:4, is a clear reference to 1) the Temple/churches and congregations; and 2) the people the Temple/churches and congregations pointed to, the people who identify with God:

If my PEOPLE, which are called by my name.... 2Chr. 7:14

For the children of Judah...have set their abominations in **the HOUSE which is called by my name....** Jer. 7:30

For, lo, I begin to bring evil on **the CITY which is called by my name**, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished.... Jer. 25:29

The terms “city” and “people” refer to the same entity:

...O my God: for **thy CITY and thy PEOPLE are called by thy name.** Dan 9:19

In the N. T. scriptures as well, those who identify with God are said to be “called” by His name:

...And **the DISCIPLES were called Christians** first in Antioch. Acts 11:26

Do not they blaspheme **that worthy name by the which YE are called?** Jas. 2:7

Following, therefore, the pattern established in the O. T., the people of God identify with the temple:

Know ye not that **YE are the temple of God**, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 1 Cor. 3:16

So too, the following verses indicate that the “midst” in view in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, like the “midst” of the “city” (Jerusalem) of Jeremiah 21:4, could only be that of the external assembly of those that name the name of God:

Both male and female shall ye **put out, without the camp** shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, **in the midst whereof I dwell.** Num. 5:3 (comp. 1 Cor. 5:1, 2, 5-7)

And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death...So shalt thou **put the evil away from the midst of thee.** Deut. 13:5

O ye children of Benjamin, **gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem**, and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Bethhaccerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction. Jer. 6:1

But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares **among** the wheat, and went his way. Matt. 13:25

Then let them which are in **Judaea** flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the **midst** of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter **thereinto.** Lk. 21:21

And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from **among** you. 1 Cor. 5:2

Wherefore come out from **among** them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.... 2 Cor. 6:17

Q4. What Biblical sanction do we have for a para-church organization like Family Radio being used as the means of spreading the Gospel? This has always been a weakness of the FR since its inception - it is accountable to no one. It should be accountable to a local body of believers - ruled by elders and deacons. This is what the Bible teaches. Now this fatal flaw of FR is making itself manifest - since it is not accountable, then one man (Mr. Camping) can ship wreck it.

The Bible knows of no “para-church” organizations. Either an entity is a biblically ordained institution or it is not. In this our day, with God’s judgment having come on the visible church - the once biblically ordained institution - there is no longer an external entity that serves as an earthly representative of the heavenly kingdom. The only delineation now that exists among men is the actual, inner, eternal distinction between those who are the children of the devil and those who are the children of the King (Eph. 2:1-10; 1 John 3:10), the Father of Lights. We are either with Christ, or against Him (Matt. 12:30).

Even before the N. T. church era was officially launched, we read of a time when the disciples expressed their belief that if one did not belong to *their* group, identifying with Christ and the twelve, this individual’s gospel endeavor ought to be stopped:

And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. Mk. 9:38-40

The question you raise actually is this: Could a believer share the Gospel on his own during the church age, independent of the support or guidance of his local congregation? The Bible’s answer to this question is a resounding *yes*. The second question you are posing is, Is the proclamation of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus valid only under the protective and supervisory umbrella of a healthy, flourishing visible assembly on earth? The Bible’s answer – *certainly not*.

Do you recall the rules governing women’s proper conduct when the whole church came together? They were to “keep silence in the churches,” for they were

not permitted to speak (1 Cor. 14:34). It was even a “shame for women to speak in the church” (v. 35). And yet, we find, in 1 Cor. 11, the following injunction (v. 5):

But every woman that **prayeth** or **prophesieth** with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

With this verse, God teaches that a believing woman surely is to prophesy; yet her prophesying must be done *outside* of the context of a formal, ecclesiastical gathering. Moreover, God teaches that every believer has a prophetic role, and commands them to “be ready to always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15); this the believer’s appointment is not based on a local congregation’s consensus or approval. A truly notable example of an unlikely witness is found in 2 Kings 5. Here we find a child (non-adult), a girl (non-male), and one who “waited on” the wife of Naaman the leper as a captive slave of the Syrians – an individual with no accountability to any political or ecclesiastical body of Israel. Nevertheless, it is through this “little maid” that our sovereign God was pleased to make known His healing, saving power:

And the Syrians had gone out...and had brought away **captive** out of the land of Israel a **little maid**; and she waited on Naaman’s wife. And she said unto her mistress, **Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.** 2 Ki 5:2, 3

The effectual “operation of God” (Col. 2:12) causes this little slave girl to express her faith, her belief that God was more than able to heal Naaman of his leprosy through the prophet Elisha. Was she to remain silent, because she was accountable to no one? Was this “little” witness displaying early signs of apostasy, of heading toward the inevitable shipwreck of faith, in her having been displaced from the oversight of the elders and priests of Israel? We also ought to remember the women at the tomb, who were commanded to go “tell” the disciples – and this prior to Pentecost, before any church body had officially commissioned them (Matt. 28:7).

The apostle Paul, too, makes it a point to make known the fact that following his conversion, he had no contact with the church in Jerusalem:

...immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter.... Gal. 1:16b-18a

Really, until the commissioning of Saul and Barnabas by the church in Antioch in Acts 13 (vv. 1-3), no believer, under the auspices of the church, had been set apart for the specific purpose of sending forth the Gospel. Any witnessing that was done was very much independent of any governing body. If am not mistaken, this is exactly what FR is and does, and has, by God's grace alone, always done – preaching the word, being “instant in season out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2), as all believers ought (this, by the way, is also the sole reason for the existence of Good Message Foundation). Such obedience to the commission of our King could hardly be deemed a “fatal flaw.”

Actually, it is not FR we ought to be concerned about. Rather, it is the vast majority of unbelievers within the visible assembly of our day who have absolutely no business in handling the word of God, for they do not know the One of Whom they speak (Jer. 2:8). In Psalm 50, God states His rebuke in this manner:

But unto the wicked God saith, **What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?** Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. vv. 16, 17

Indeed, II Timothy speaks of the visible assembly of our time when the teachers and those that are taught are “deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13; see also 1 Tim. 1:7):

This know also, **that in the last days perilous times shall come.** For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; **Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:** from such turn away...**Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.** 2 Tim. 3:1-5, 7

For **the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine;** but after their own lusts shall they **heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;** And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 2 Tim. 4:3, 4

Another important point is the Bible's teaching on the absolute sufficiency of the Scriptures as the means by which God works to mold His own unto the last day. The personal indwelling of God and His effectual working through His word is what guides, instructs, even chastens and rebukes His children. Nowhere in His word does God teach that the Elders and Deacons, the shadow offices of two facets of the Lord Jesus' ministry, are *necessary conditions* for the spiritual growth of the truly regenerate. In fact, based on the way God defines His work of salvation, we should seriously examine our spiritual condition if we find that our lifestyle becomes quite lascivious and unrestrained when other men, also earthen vessels, are not watching us. To the child of God, the incomprehensible fact that the Creator God knows his “downsitting” and “uprising,” and “understandest” his “thought afar off” (Ps. 139:2) ought to mean, and impact his life, so much more than “having men's persons in admiration” (Jude 1:16).

Here is a sample list of verses that unequivocally teach that upon salvation, the children of God are on their way to growing “as newborn babes” and “in grace” (1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18), maintaining “good works” (Tit. 3:8), “increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10) and mortifying the deeds of the flesh (cf. Gal. 5:19; Col. 3:5-10). Indeed, the “path of the just” will shine “more and more un to the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18):

I will bless the LORD, Who hath given me **counsel:** my **reins** [the inner man] also **instruct** me in the night seasons. Ps. 16:7

I will instruct thee and **teach** thee in the way **which thou shalt go:** **I will guide** thee with mine eye. Ps. 32:8

Thy word have I hid in mine **heart,** that **I might not sin against Thee.** Ps. 119:11

Thy testimonies also are my delight and my **counsellors** Ps. 119:24

Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: **turn Thou me, and I shall be turned;** for Thou art the LORD my God. Jer 31:18b

...I will put my **law** in their **inward parts**, and **write** it in their **hearts**...And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: Jer 31:33, 34a (comp. 1 John 2:27)

And **I** will put my **Spirit** within you, and **cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them.** Ezek. 36:27

Being confident of this very thing, that **He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ**...For it is **God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.** Phil. 1:6, 2:13

...I also labour, **striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily.** Col. 1:29

...the **word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.** 1 Thess. 2:13

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is **profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:** That the man of God may be **perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.** 2 Tim. 3:16, 17

For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, **God dealeth with you as with sons;** for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? Heb. 13:6, 7

Now the God of peace...**Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight,** through Jesus Christ.... Heb. 13:20, 21

As many as I love, **I rebuke and chasten:** be zealous therefore, and repent. Rev. 3:19