

20100516 how does the world end?

I. Introduction

About 2 months ago I went to the Red Box to pick up a movie for my wife and I and a friend to watch one Friday night, and I got a movie that I had wanted to see for awhile but didn't catch in the theatre: *2012*. This movie is about a misinterpreted prediction that the Myan calendar states the world will end in 2012. I thought this was one of the worst movies I've ever seen. The acting was good, but that was it. The script was horrible: it got to the point at the end of the movie where I was just making sarcastic comments throughout. Those of you who have seen it know this just from the last line in the movie. Remember this? "No more pull-ups." So sweet. People said to me that the special effects made it good and I thought, "Yeah, except for the fact that every special effect showed 100,000 people dying. So I couldn't really enjoy that either."

I found at least one person who agreed with me: Peter Travers of Rolling Stone criticized the film: "Beware 2012, which works the dubious miracle of almost matching *Transformers 2* for sheer, cynical, mind-numbing, time-wasting, money-draining, soul-sucking stupidity."

Now for all of you who liked this movie I will point out that it has 6.0 out of 10 rating on imdb's website, and it did gross nearly 800 million dollars.

- A. But here's why I think that movie did well: because we are obsessed with the end of the world. Every few years you'll have movies come out like *2012* or *Deep Impact*. You see this in lots of literature like sci-fi novels or Christian books like *Left Behind*. You'll even see this creep into politics in the way people treat the nation of Israel or proliferation of nuclear weapons or even environmentalism.
- B. So we're kicking off a series today called *So You're Dead, Now What?* Because we all die. It's easy to get narrowly focused on our own lives, but if there is this grand conclusion to which we are all heading then we should know about this. So we're going to look at the Bible for these 3 weeks and we're going to ask 3 questions: how does the world end? What's the deal with hell? What is heaven like? The reason we're doing this series is that **hope for the future gives us power in the present**. So we're going to talk about the hope that Jesus gives.
- C. And I think there are 2 extremes of people when it comes to these issues.
 1. On one end you have the person who's obsessed with this stuff: they are obsessed with the end of the world, they only want to study the book of Revelation in the bible, any time you talk to them they point out something in the news that's pointing to the end of the world. There's not very many of these people, but there's a few.
 2. And I think partly because of that person you have the person at the other end of the spectrum who doesn't want to think about the end of the world at all. This person will say, "Jesus came to this earth so we need to follow his example and not worry about something far off in the future. We have enough problems now, so let's worry about these."

3. But I think the balance is in the middle, where we say, “In light of eternity, God wants us to live a certain way now.” So we bring the two together.
 4. At Mosaic we don’t talk about end times kind of things much, but it’s important for us to recognize the Bible’s truths about eternity, because they should directly influence how we live now.
 5. So as we go through these topics, this isn’t a series about information. We’ll have a lot of information, but this is about application: how does this impact your life.
- D. We’re starting this series by talking about “How does the world end?” We’re going to walk through a passage of the bible in 2 Peter 3. Peter, the apostle of Jesus, wrote this as a letter, and he ends his letter with this section that the editors put a title in that calls this: “The Day of the Lord Is Coming.” So let’s start reading.
- II. 2 Peter 3: **1** This is my second letter to you, dear friends, and in both of them I have tried to stimulate your wholesome thinking and refresh your memory. **2** I want you to remember what the holy prophets said long ago and what our Lord and Savior commanded through your apostles. He wants to remind us of things, and the main thing he’s going to remind us of, we’ll see, is that Jesus is coming back.
- A. John 14: **2** In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. Jesus himself predicted that one day he will come back.
- B. It’s a reality in spite of what people say. **3** Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. **4** They will say, “What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created.”
1. people have been saying for a long time that Jesus was coming back.
 - The Watchtower Society has publicly given “end of the world” dates of **1914, 1918, 1920, 1925, 1941, 1975 and 1994**
 - Ronald Weinland wrote a book called *2008 - God's Final Witness*, and he says, “If [Jesus doesn’t reuturn in 2008], then I’m nothing but a false prophet...”
 2. It can almost become a joke. We should be skeptical of date-setters. Knowing that he is coming is more important than knowing when he is coming.
- C. Look at the next thing Peter writes. He argues that we know Jesus is coming back, that it’s a reality because God is just.
1. **5** They deliberately forget that God made the heavens by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water. God is our Creator, and that’s one reason we know Jesus is going to come back. When God created the world he said, “It is good.” But then sin entered the picture and brought death and pain and

separation. And we don't have a God who created the world and let it be. We have one who is actively involved in his creation and through Jesus is redeeming it. And we know that Jesus is coming back because he hasn't yet restored this world to its original intent. And when Jesus comes back he will institute his kingdom the way it's supposed to be.

2. **6 Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood.** This was an example of God's justice: he purged the world of sin, but there were still sinners alive, so sin spread once again. Because of sin, we still look forward to the day Jesus will return. And you know this:
 - When you experience favoritism on your kids' sports team you know something is wrong.
 - When you see the news of a child murdered in the crosshairs of gang violence you know this isn't right.
 - When yet another job application gets turned down you think, "This is NOT good!"

When you see that our world is not right...you see why Jesus is coming back: one day Jesus will restore this world to its original intent.

3. And then he writes that God's justice will be fulfilled at the end. **7 And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the Day of Judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed.** It's because of God's justice that he will make all things right. We're going to talk about this justice more next week as we ask, "What's the deal with hell?"
- D. 2nd coming is a reality no matter how long it takes. **8 But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day.** No matter how long it takes, Jesus is coming again.
 1. God is on his own timetable. So we don't need to worry if it seems like he should be coming back or he is coming back or isn't coming back, because he will bring justice at just the right time.

It's said: The wheels of God's justice grind slowly, yet they grind exceedingly fine.

2. It's interesting if you do a quick bible survey, because it becomes evident very quickly that all the New Testament writers thought they were living in the end times. They talk about being ready and on constant watch, and that was 2000 years ago. This is interesting because Jesus could return at any moment. So in a sense every person who ever lived was in the end times, because any time could be the end times. So we say that yes, we are living in the end times because Jesus could return at any moment. But we are careful how we flesh that out. In the book of Thessalonians Paul chastises some in the church who have quit their jobs because they say Jesus is coming back. Paul says, "Yes, Jesus is coming back. But you still do the same things because we don't know when."

III. What is the 2nd coming like? **10 But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief.** Now let's talk about the day of the Lord. After Jesus was

crucified, he was buried in the tomb. Three days later he rose from the dead, and 40 days after that his disciples watched him ascend into the heavens. And he's promised that one day, from those same heavens, he will descend.

- A. We don't know when it will be. In Acts 1:7 He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know."

I'm going to get into some details of this, and cover a whole lot really quickly. But I want you to have a biblical foundation of this. I know there are smart Christians who love Jesus and love the Bible who disagree with me on some of this, but there a saying we like to use that applies to this topic: **In matters of doctrine, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; but in all things love.** Some of what I get into IS opinion, but I believe it's what the Bible teaches.

Something else that's important to remember when you talk about end-times stuff is something Malcolm Gladwell helped me understand. He says there's a difference between a puzzle and a mystery. A puzzle has a defined amount of different pieces and every piece you add gives you a clearer picture. But a mystery doesn't have a defined amount of information—in fact, sometimes you can even have too much.

My opinion is that Christians get in trouble when we treat the end of the world like a puzzle instead of a mystery. You'll see well-meaning Christians who have charts and graphs and webs of Scriptures and predictions of timelines—they're treating this topic like it's a puzzle and if they can piece together all the clues and crack the code.

My opinion is that it's much more like a mystery. We know some things about his return. We know the nature of Jesus. So we can say with certainty that some things will happen, but we won't know every intricacy of it until it takes place. In fact, in our wildest imaginations we can't picture what this is like.

- B. So what DO we know? **There will be cataclysmic events. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment.^[a] 11 Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live, 12 looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames.**

This passage is one piece of it, so really quickly I'm going to give you an overall picture of what will happen:

1. **The second coming of Jesus will be accompanied by phenomena that the whole world will notice.**
 - Matthew 24:29 says the universe will be radically disrupted.
 - Matthew 24 and 2 Thessalonians 1 say Jesus will be visible in the sky with an angel escort.
 - 2 Thessalonians 4:16 and 2 Thessalonians 1:7 say we'll hear a trumpet blast and we'll see fire in the sky.

And again this goes back to the puzzle versus mystery idea. We don't try to piece these together to figure out exactly what they will be like; we don't know. But we do know these things will happen, even though in our wildest imaginations we probably can't picture it.

2. **All of these events associated with the second coming will take place in a single event at the end of time.** A popular view is that Jesus will come back in stages over a 1000+ year period; there are people I respect who are mentors of mine who believe that; but it's okay for them to be wrong! Because the New Testament consistently speaks of the return of Christ as a singular event.
3. You'll also hear of people talk about the Antichrist. **I don't believe the Bible teaches that there is a single person at the end of time who is the antichrist.** Here's why: the Bible uses the word "antichrist" 4 times, and they're all in the books of 1 & 2 John, and it talks about how an antichrist is anyone who opposes Jesus, and there are many antichrists already here. Listen: 1 John 2:18 **Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared. From this we know that the last hour has come.** 1 John 2:22 **And who is a liar? Anyone who says that Jesus is not the Christ. Anyone who denies the Father and the Son is an antichrist.**
4. **Christ's return will be the occasion for several key end-time events:**
 - The resurrection of the dead and the rapture of the living.
 - The judgment
 - The beginning of heaven and hell
5. Let's talk about the resurrection of the dead and the rapture of the living.
 - a. The New Testament consistently speaks of a resurrection DAY, when all who are dead, both good and evil, will be raised. John 5:28 **...the time is coming when all the dead in their graves will hear the voice of God's Son, 29 and they will rise again. Those who have done good will rise to experience eternal life, and those who have continued in evil will rise to experience judgment.**
 - b. A popular view is that there will be a secret rapture where Christians will disappear from the earth. But the bible doesn't teach that.
 - c. 1 Thessalonians 4 says Christians will gather together with Jesus before being escorted to judgment.
 - d. Matthew 25 says that nonchristians will be gathered up by angels and taken to the judgment.
6. At **the judgment** every person who has ever lived will appear before God's judgment seat to give an account of their life. Romans 4:12 and Hebrews 9:27 say that.
 - a. All of our deeds, both good and bad, will be examined. [Matthew 16:27] We're saved by faith, but judged by our works.

- b. Matthew 25.31-46 teaches that judgment day is not the occasion for determining what our eternal destiny will be, but to explain why we receive the judgment we are given.
- C. **After the judgment there will be eternal states of hell and a new heaven and earth.** Look back at 2 Peter 3:13 **But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness.** The next 2 weeks we'll deal with this in more detail as we ask "What's the deal with hell?" and "what will heaven be like?" But I want to give you an overview on the process of getting there.
1. When people die now they do not go to heaven or hell. People only go to heaven or hell after judgment day.
 2. However, when people die now their soul does go to a temporary place of suffering or reward. The word used in the New Testament for the place of suffering is Hades, mentioned in Luke 16. The word used in the New Testament for the place of reward is Paradise. In Luke 24:43 Jesus tells the criminal on the cross, "Today you will be with me in Paradise."
 3. At the judgment some will be sent to hell, a place of eternal torment that we'll talk about more next week.
 4. Others will be sent with resurrected, physical bodies new heaven and new earth, to experience creation as God meant it to be.

IV. I know today has been like drinking from a fire hydrant. So the logical question is: what's our response to all this? Why does this matter? I said earlier the theme of this series: hope in the future gives us power in the present. So depending on where you are there is a way you need to live out this power.

- A. **If you're a follower of Jesus**, verse 14 says what your response should be: **14 And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight.** If you are a follower of Jesus, you cling to that hope.
1. If you are facing temptation, it's not a nothing-battle that doesn't matter; it's a war with cosmic consequences and the angels watch to see what you'll do.
 2. If you are facing tragedy, hold on to the hope that Jesus will consummate his kingdom and make all things right.
 3. If you have been wronged, know that God will bring justice.
 4. If you are hopeful for a spouse to be found, a pregnancy to become reality, a child to come home, a marriage to be healed...remember that God will wipe every tear from your eyes.
 5. If you have been redeemed, join God in his work of bringing justice and peace to this world.
- B. **If you're not a Christian**, by that I mean if you have not laid down your life at the feet of Jesus and taken up your cross to follow him, verse 9 shows what your response should be: **9 The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.** If you're not a Christian, you need to repent. 2012 is a goofy movie, but it does have a

profound truth: one day this world will end. On that day it doesn't matter—unlike the movie—how much money you have. It doesn't matter how good you've been. It doesn't matter if you had things mapped out exactly how the end of the world was going to come. The only thing that matters is do you have grace? Do you have grace to cover all your sins so that when you stand before that judgment seat you will hear the savior say, "Well done, good and faithful servant?"

LET'S PRAY