



How many of you remember what you were doing on December 21, 2012? That date may not mean anything to you, and the reason is that nothing really happened on that day. However, that was the most recent time there was a widespread prediction that the world was going to end. The ancient Mayans had a calendar that apparently expired at 11:11 on December 21, 2012. Apparently, no one told them that all you had to do was go down to the Mayan Office Depot and pick up a refill.



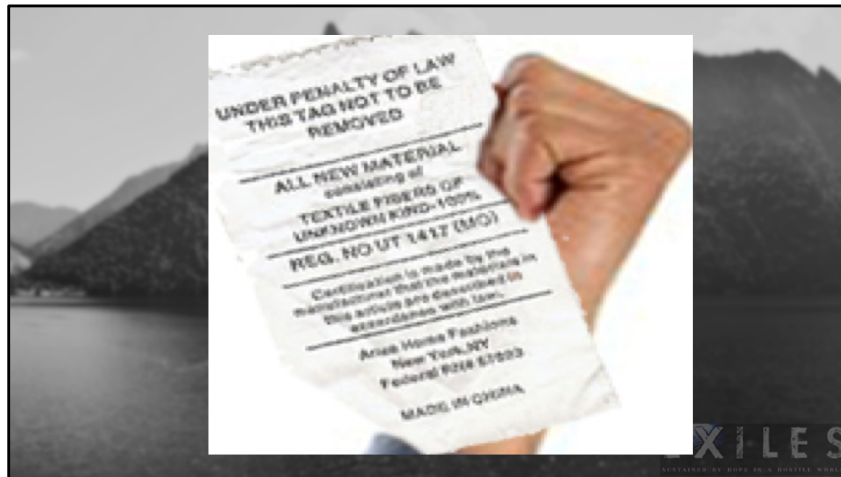
. The ancient Mayans had a calendar that apparently expired at 11:11 on December 21, 2012. Apparently, no one told them that all you had to do was go down to the Mayan Office Depot and pick up a refill.



But it caused a lot of people to start reflecting on what they would do if they knew the world was going to end. And it tapped into a fear that is on a lot of people's minds. One good barometer for how much the end of the world was on people's minds is Hollywood. Since the year 2000, there have been almost 150 movies made that dealt with the end of the world-- everything from 2012 to The Day After Tomorrow" to Armageddon to Seeking a Friend for the End of the World" There actually have been as many moveis about the apocalypse in the last 18 years than in the first hundred years of Hollywood.

In 2012, An online humor magazine invited readers to contribute images of what they would do if they knew the world was going to end soon. Here were some of the responses that are fit to show in church...









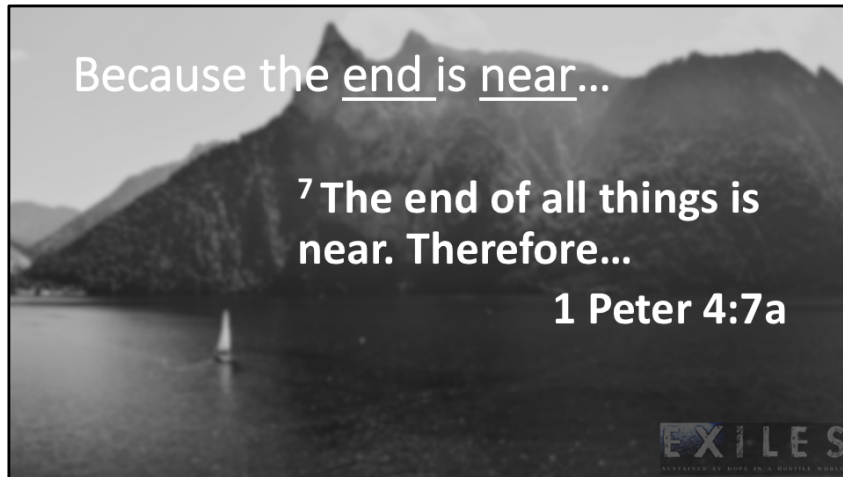
So what would be on your list? And what if we made it more personal? Its one thing to ask what you would do if you knew the world was coming to an end. But what would you do if you knew YOUR world was coming to an end?

Earlier This week John McCain opted to discontinue treatments for his brain tumor. And just last night we learned that he passed away. What was on his list?



This morning, I want to talk about what was on Peter's list. I'm calling this sermon "Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth" And you may have noticed this already, or you may have heard this saying before, but just in case you haven't, take your pen and on your listening guide, take a minute to underline the first letter of each word in that sermon title. That's right. The Bible is our Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth. There are a truckload of Scriptures in your listening guide and built into the You Version app this week, and we aren't going to be able to look at all of them during our time together this morning. But I want to challenge you this week to study them on your own. We're going to read a portion of the passage for this morning, not the whole thing, but if you are physically able, please stand for the reading of God's Word

⁷ The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. ⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.



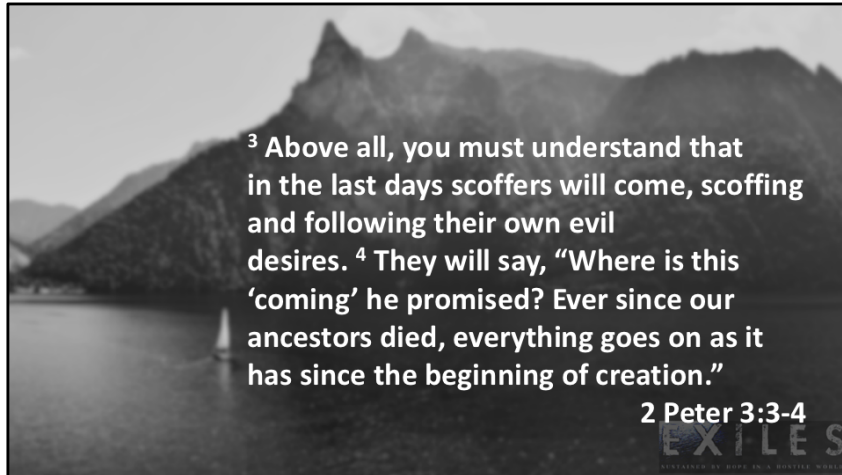
Because the end is near (v.7)...

Peter is talking about when Jesus will return. The word “end” is the Greek word *telos*, which means fulfillment or completion. And that is almost always referring to the finished work of Jesus. Keep in mind he’s writing this two thousand years ago, so it makes you wonder what he means by “near.” But time and time again, Scripture tells us what signs to look for:

1 Timothy 4:1: in the later times people will abandon the faith.

In 1 John, the apostle writes, ¹⁸ Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.

(In the Greek, you don’t have the definite article “the.” It just says “Antichrist” which suggests a state of mind more than a person. Antichrist is any attitude that sets itself up in opposition to Christ.



Check out what Peter himself writes in 2 Peter 3:

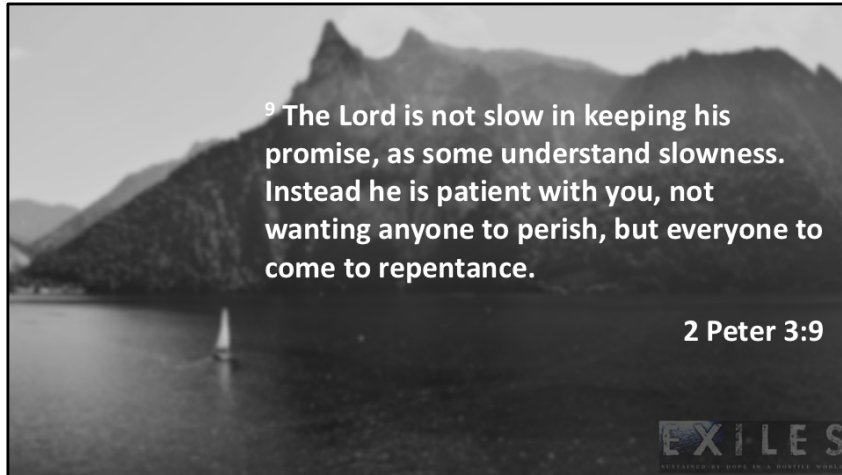
in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. ⁴ They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”

So why is it taking so long? Peter has an answer for that also:

⁸ But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

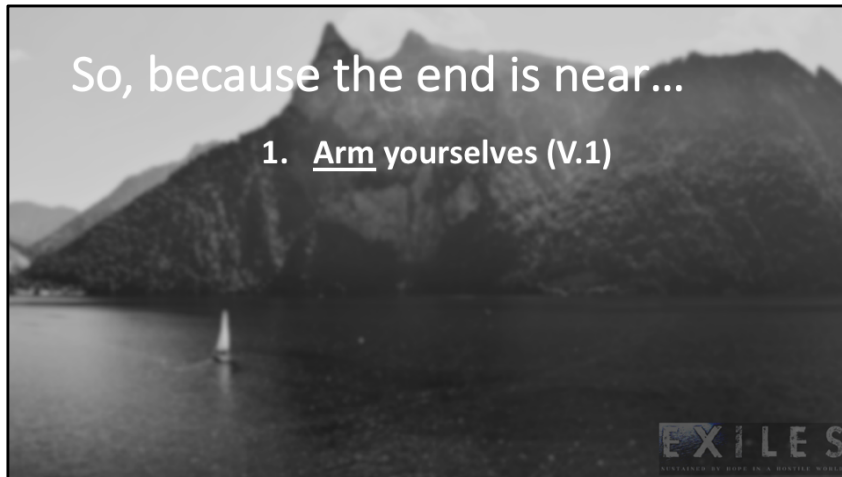
Peter knew, even writing a generation after Jesus ascended back into heaven, that people were getting impatient for the return of Christ. Now, its 2000 years later, and the return of Christ is treated as a punch line—“Jesus is coming: look busy!”

Even the most faithful among us are wondering, why does he wait so long? Peter gives the answer for that just a few verses later:



Every day Jesus delays his coming is one more day for lost people to come to repentance. That's why Mike Warnke, a Christian comedian from the 70's put it this way:

I wanna be alive when the Lord comes. And I think 'm gonna be alive in the flesh, because I think he's coming back real soon. And when the Lord comes, and I start going up in the Rapture, I'm gonna reach out and grab a sinner in both hands. And as we start zippin' up through them clouds, man, I'm gonna look at those two old boys and say, "Now do you guys get saved, or do I let go?"



Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude

I realize that when you study a verse like this in Alabama, a lot of people are like, okay. Done. I'm armed. What's next?

Peter is talking about arming yourself for spiritual warfare. Do you know how to do that?

2 Corinthians 10:3-5NIV

3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

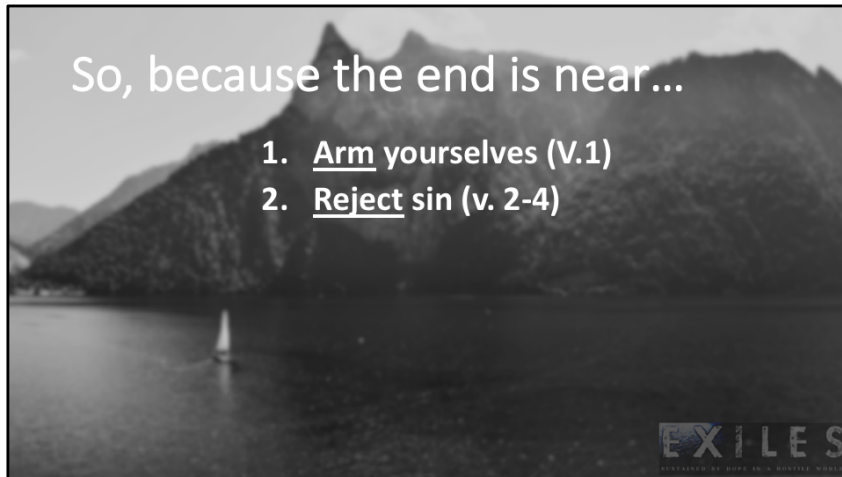
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Ephesians 6:10-17NIV

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's

schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.



because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. 2 As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. 3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. 4 They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you.

Being done with sin doesn't mean you don't sin anymore. It means that you are done having sin control you. Before you became a Christian, you weren't free not to sin. Now, you are free to choose righteousness. As Peter says, you've spent enough time in the past--any time is too much time--doing what pagans do. Now, you can choose differently.

Ephesians 4:25-28NIV

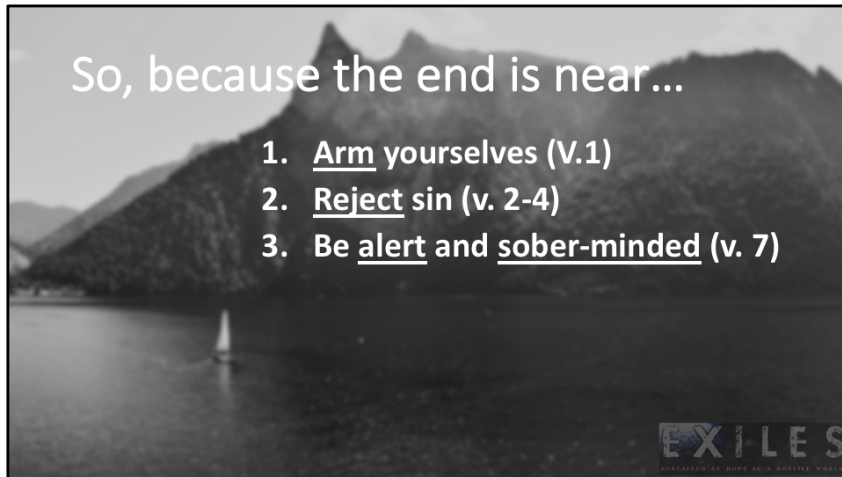
25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 26 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. 28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own

hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.
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Colossians 3:5-11NIV

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. 11 Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

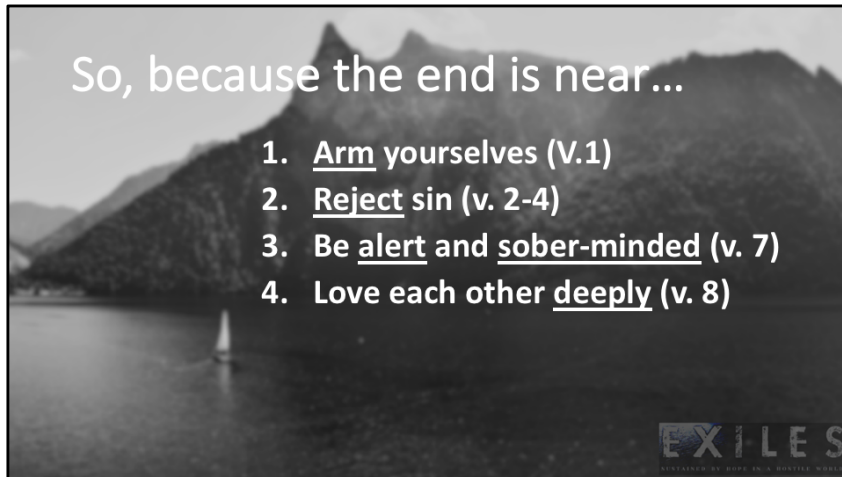


7 The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray.

People lose their minds when they start thinking about the end times. And it was the same in Peter's day. People were quitting their jobs and divorcing their wives or giving up on marriage and having children altogether because they believed Jesus would be returning any day. And the trick to the Christian life is to always live with that expectation while still making the most of every day.

The big takeaway here is that sometimes people work so hard on the "alert" part that they neglect the "sober-minded" part. We go looking for the antichrist or try to read significance into lunar eclipses or volcanic activity or whatever. But whenever Jesus taught on the end times, He emphasized that no one knows the day or the hour.

So keep your head, and remember what the point of being alert and sober-minded is. Verse 7 says that it is so you can pray, not so you can worry.



8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

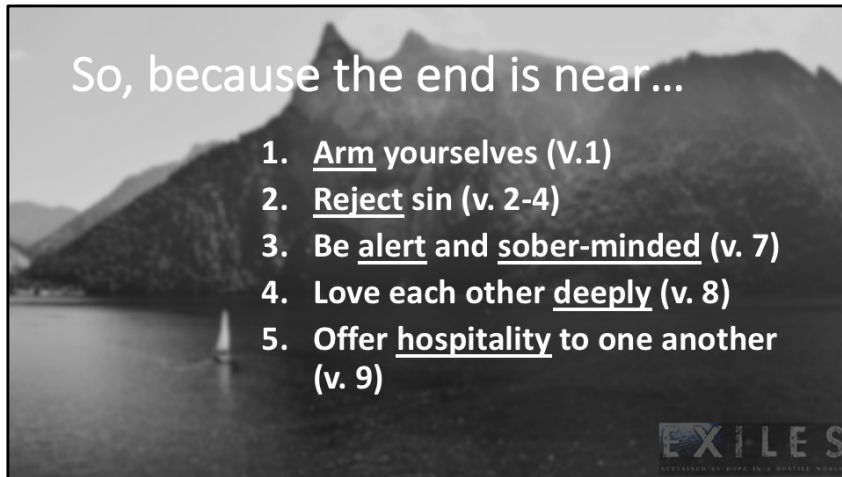
In verses 8-10 Peter makes three statements that all have a “one another” statement in them. He turns the focus from the individual to the community. This is so important. A lot of times when we think about how we would answer the “what would you do if you knew the world was going to end” or the more personal “what would you do if you knew you had only six months to live” our answers tend to be about our bucket list, or our to-dos. Peter doesn’t say, “The end is near, therefore go on a spending spree, or see the Grand Canyon, or whatever.” He says, “Above all, love each other deeply, for love covers over a multitude of sins.”

The apostle John is often called the apostle of love. It’s in John’s gospel that we read Jesus saying “A new command I give you, that you love one another.. By this will all men know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”

In 1 John 4, John uses the word “love” 21 times in 12 verses.

There is a church tradition, which says, that when John was evidently

an old man in Ephesus, he had to be carried to the church in the arms of his disciples. At these meetings, he was accustomed to say no more than, "Little children, love one another!" After a time, the disciples wearied at always hearing the same words, asked, "Master, why do you always say this?" "It is the Lord's command," was his reply. "And if this alone be done, it is enough!"

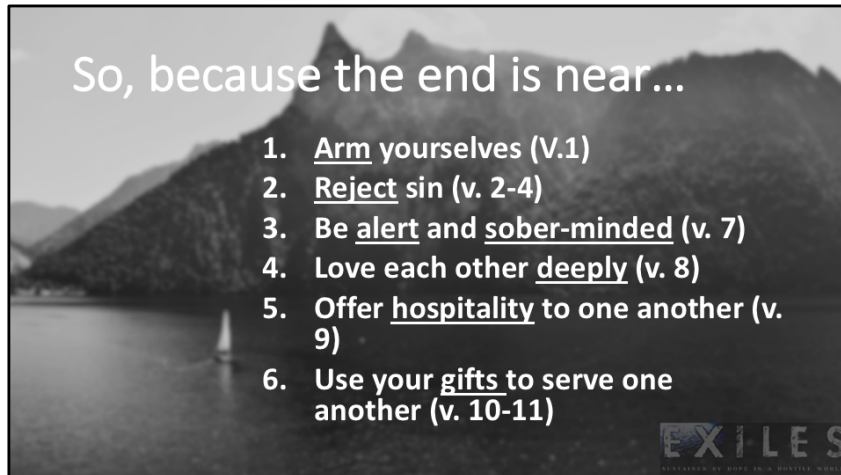


9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling

Peter's next "one another" is to offer hospitality. And again, it doesn't always seem like this should be high on our list when we are thinking about leaving this world. "Offer hospitality?" But hospitality was a big deal in Peter's world. And it still is. The writer of Hebrews said

NIV

2 Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.



10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides,

Everything on Peter's list is designed to keep us from being inward focused and instead be outward focused.

The story goes that one day St Francis was weeding in his garden, when someone asked him "Brother Francis, what would you do if you knew you were going to die in ten minutes." Francis said, "I'd try to finish this row." That's a life lived with no regrets, no unfinished business.



What's the point?

... so that in all things God may be
praised through Jesus Christ. To him be
the glory and the power for ever and
ever. Amen!

1 Peter 4:11

EXILES
SUSTAINED BY HOPE IN A HOSTILE WORLD