

INTRODUCTION

Most newspapers have special writers who only compose the headlines. Some are better than others, because headlines can sometimes be funny. Here are some actual headlines that have appeared in newspapers:

“Grandmother of Eight Makes Hole in One.”
“Police Begin Campaign to Run Down Jaywalkers”
“Dealers Will Hear Car Talk at Noon”
“Two Sisters Reunite After Eighteen Years at Checkout Counter”
“Juvenile Court To Try Shooting Defendant”
“Man Missing Ear Waives Hearing”
“Hospital Sued by Seven Foot Doctors”

Some headlines are funny, but some can be scary. This is an actual headline from the New York Times on Halloween of 1938. It says: “RADIO LISTENERS IN PANIC TAKING WAR DRAMA AS FACT.” The next line says: “Many flee homes to escape ‘gas raid from Mars.’” This hysteria was created by a radio broadcast by Orson Wells of H.G. Well’s book, *The War of the Worlds*.

On the night before Halloween, 12 million Americans were listening to the Mercury Theater of the Air. As part of the drama, dance music was interrupted several times by fake news bulletins reporting a huge flaming object had dropped on a farm near Grover’s Mill, New Jersey. An actor playing a reporter described the scene of the spacecraft with these words: “Something’s wriggling out of the shadow like a gray snake. Now there’s another one, and another. They look like tentacles to me. I can see the thing’s body. It’s large as a bear and glistens like wet leather. But that face...it’s indescribable. I can hardly force myself to keep looking at it. The eyes are black and gleam like a serpent. The mouth is V-shaped with saliva dripping from its rimless lips that seem to quiver and pulsate...” Can you imagine hearing those in words in 1938 here in East Texas? That was long before “My Favorite Martian,” “Mork and Mindy” or “Third Rock from the Sun.”

People across America thought the news bulletins were real. Thousands of people panicked and took to the highways to flee that part of the country. They hid in cellars, and wrapped their heads in wet towels to protect them from the poisonous gases. They really thought aliens had landed. Some have noted his broadcast was the first example of how media can be used to confuse or sway and entire nation.

The broadcast in 1938 was just a fictional account, but according to the Bible, Aliens *have* landed on planet earth. When I started teaching through I Peter last year, I entitled the series “Aliens” based on this passage. To me, it is the key passage in the entire letter. Glance at verses 9 and 10 to be reminded that our reason for existence is to “declare the praises of God.” Verse 11 represents a transition in the book. To this point, we’ve been studying doctrine: who we are and what we believe. But beginning in verse 11, Peter starts to give some practical directions about how we are to live out our lives. He identifies us as aliens. Let’s start with verse 11: Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world to abstain from sinful desires which war against

your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. (I Peter 2:11-12) Eugene Petersen paraphrases it this way: Friends, this world is not your home, so don't make yourselves cozy in it. Don't indulge your ego at the expense of your soul. Live an exemplary life among the natives so that your actions will refute their prejudices. Then they'll be won over to God's side and be there to join in the celebration when he arrives. (*The Message*) As we study this passage, there are four important things we need to understand:

1. WE ARE THE ALIENS!

What do you think of when you hear the word "alien?" Some people imagine a couple of cute little spacemen in a flying saucer. Others have nightmares about the scary creatures in the Aliens Movie series, or maybe you think of lovable E.T. riding that bicycle over the trees. All the television series like the "X-Files" and movies like "Signs" testify we are fascinated with the possibility that we are not alone in this universe.

I've been asked before if I believe there is intelligent life on other planets. My response is usually, "I'm not even sure there is intelligent life on Earth!" Whether there is intelligent life on other planets is not the point of this passage. The Bible says all of us who are followers of Jesus are like aliens in this world.

According to the dictionary the word "alien" has three meanings: (1) "Belonging or relating to another person, place, or thing; (2) Relating, belonging, or owing allegiance to another country or government; (3) Differing in nature or character typically to the point of incompatibility."

When we were born the first time, we were born into this world. This is the world you can see, smell, taste, hear and feel. When you experience a spiritual birth, you are born again into a new world. From that moment on, we belong to a different world and we no longer feel at home in this world. There are two kinds of people living on this rock—the natives and the aliens. The natives are the ones who live for this world, the aliens are the ones who live here but realize there is another world to live for.

If we are aliens in this world, where are we from? Where is our real home? In Philippians 3:20 Paul wrote: "We're citizens of high heaven! We're waiting the arrival of the Savior, the Master, Jesus Christ who will transform our earthly bodies into glorious bodies like his own." (Philippians 3:20 *The Message*)

We live here, but this isn't our home. That's why we never feel totally at home in this world. Heaven is our true home. We reside in this world, but we don't *belong* here.

Pastor John Piper wrote, "Our first and primary citizenship is in heaven—not the United States. Our first and primary constitution is the Bible not the U.S. Constitution; our first and primary King and Commander and Chief is Jesus Christ and not to our President, and the dominant cravings of our heart are not for the treasures and tributes of the world, but for the kingdom of God. I love America and I support and pray for our President—as the scripture tells us to do. But I

realize that our American culture is temporary, and the Kingdom of God is eternal. We are aliens and we'll never quite fit into this world."

2. WE'RE IN A WAR OF THE WORLDS!

Not only are we aliens, but we are involved in a war of the worlds. The original natives of this planet were placed here to live a life of goodness and kindness, but they rebelled against the Creator and started living self-centered lives. Because we are aliens, we live in a world hostile to our way of thinking and our way of life.

C.S. Lewis described it this way: "This universe is at war. It is a civil war, a rebellion, and we are living in a part of the universe occupied by the rebel. Enemy-occupied territory—that is what the world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage. When you go to church you are really listening-in to the secret wireless from our friends: that is why the enemy is so anxious to prevent us from going." (*Mere Christianity*, p. 121)

During WWII, Americans spoke about fighting a war on three fronts: There was the war in Europe against the spread of Nazism. Then there was the war in the Pacific Theater against Imperial Japan. But I have heard many people who were members of the Greatest Generation speak of fighting the war on the Home Front. These were the people like Rosey the Riveter who worked in factories and those who endured rationing and blackouts. In our spiritual war, we battle on three fronts as well: the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world is our external foe; our flesh is our internal foe; and the devil is the infernal foe. In this passage we will look at two fronts in this war:

(1) It is a personal war fought within my soul

Peter writes in verse 11 that we must "abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul." When we are born in this world, we are equipped with a full set of sinful desires and lusts. When we are born again and become aliens, these sinful desires aren't surgically removed. So it is a constant battle.

This battle of evil desires takes place in our soul, which is our mind. Our soul has been redeemed and changed, but these desires continue to try to sabotage our lives. What must we do? Abstain! That means we don't give in to them. I've been preaching God's Word for 34 years, and I still struggle with these evil desires that war in my soul. I struggle against them every single day of my life.

Not too long ago I was driving down the loop and some clueless person pulled out in front of me without even looking. The other lanes were full so I had to slam on my brakes. And then this guy proceeded to drive at about 20 mph up to the next light. I pulled in the next lane and stopped beside him at the light. At that moment I was involved in a war. It wasn't a war with that guy; it was a war raging in my soul. I found that there were sinful desires battling in my soul. You know what I wanted to do? I wanted to get him to roll down his window so I could say, "Hey! Did you learn to drive at the Ray Charles school of Driving? Instead I looked over there and he was

talking on a cell phone. When he looked at me, I just smiled at him (and it wasn't a snarl-smile). And when the light turned green I just drove on. Why did I abstain? Because it was the right thing to do. Besides, he was probably a member of Green Acres, or someone who has seen me on television. And I didn't want to blow my witness.

Life is a constant series of battles. You want to lie, you want to commit adultery, you want to cheat and steal and gossip and hurt people—it's a battle that takes place in your soul. When you abstain you win that battle, but the war goes on!

(2) It is a cultural war fought within our nation

Just as our sinful flesh constantly places wicked desires in our minds, the world without God is constantly trying to influence us to give in to their way of thinking as well. The battle we are facing in America is to determine the moral standards of our culture.

There are vocal, active groups in America who are pushing for the approval of everything from abortion on demand to same-sex marriages. They claim it is their right under the U.S. Constitution. The founders of our nation *did* speak of rights. They said there are truths that are self-evident: that we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights—among them are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To most of us, their reference to a Creator offers a strong argument that we believe there is a God who is source of our rights. If that is true, then they had to have some source of their understanding of this Creator. Any student of history will admit that from the beginning of our nation, the Bible was used as the basis for our moral standards.

The Greek poet, Homer, wrote the thrilling tale of how the Greek armies launched a thousand ships to rescue the beautiful Helen from Troy. Helen was the woman whose face launched a thousands ships. For ten years, the Greek armies tried to capture Troy, but they were turned back repeatedly. Finally Odysseus came up with an ingenious plan. They built a large wooden horse that was hollow within. This famous horse was called the Trojan horse. (The Italian artist Giovanni Tiepolo portrayed it this way). Several mighty Greek warriors hid inside the horse, and then all the other Greek soldiers got on their ships and sailed away. The residents of Troy assumed they surrendered, and the horse was an offering of peace. So they brought the Trojan horse inside their gates, and that night they partied to celebrate their victory. While they were sleeping in a drunken stupor, the Greek soldiers slipped out of the wooden horse killed the sentries and opened the gates to the army. That led to the fall of Troy.

The same thing has happened in America. We have welcomed a Trojan horse of morality to be brought into our homes through the media. Should we be surprised that there is confusion about what is marriage since over the past ten years, we've watched sitcoms with every possible combination imaginable? And while the church has been asleep, these forces have taken over in America.

America, wake up!! Make no mistake about it, we are in a war. It is as real as the war in Iraq. Every time you hear on the news about another explosion in Iraq, it is a reminder of the war.

Every time you hear something on the news about the display of the Ten Commandments, public prayer, abortion, or same-sex marriage, it's a reminder of the culture war in America.

We've arrived at a place where those of us who claim the Bible as our basis for truth are labeled as narrow-minded, intolerant, intellectual Neanderthals. We are going to be hated for our Biblical stance. But don't worry, because Jesus told us to expect it. In John 15 Jesus said to His current and future disciples: "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world." (John 15:18-19)

We are in a war of the worlds. The issue is: are we going to live by the standards of this world, or are we going to recognize the moral standards of the Creator. It's a war, and we are alien warriors. But don't be in despair because the battle is the Lord's. And, besides, we have a secret weapon. In the space movies, the aliens usually employ a secret weapon like a ray gun. The Bible tells us in Ephesians 6 we aren't fighting against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness. Our weapons are the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith. We wield these weapons in prayer. This secret weapon can speed to any spot on this planet at the speed of thought. The only weapon the world, the flesh, and the devil can't resist is prayer prayed in faith based on the Word of God.

3. WE HAVE A MISSION TO ACCOMPLISH!

We are aliens on a mission! We aren't just here marking time until we die and return to our Creator. We have a job to do. Have you heard the corny line from some of the outer space movies? The aliens approach some unsuspecting earthling and say, "Take us to your leader." Our mission to the inhabitants of earth is to take them to our leader.

The NIV says we are to live good lives before the pagans. But that's not a good translation. It's the Greek word *ethnos* which simply means "people." I like the Eugene Petersen puts it. "Live an exemplary life among the natives so that your actions will refute their prejudices."

We aren't just here as tourists. It's our job to help the native earthlings to become aliens like us. Peter says the best way to do that is not to hit them over the head with our doctrine. The best way to convince them is to live different lives. Our mission is to show the world a different life form—a different way of living. The native earthlings curse those who curse them, but we pray for those who curse us. The native earthlings seek revenge for those who hurt them—as aliens, we forgive those who have wronged us.

Our challenge is to live in this world without becoming a part of the thinking and lifestyle of this world. We are to be IN this world, but we are not to be OF this world. The only business we have IN the world is to WIN the world. Christians in this fallen world are like a boat in water. A boat is designed to be IN the water, but the water is not supposed to be IN the boat. If water gets IN the boat, it will soon sink. In the same way we are to be IN this world, but this world is not to be IN us. Good works won't earn your access into heaven—but we must demonstrate good works before those who don't know Jesus—or else they won't be convinced what we believe is real.

Jesus put it this way: "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

The great singer, Michael W. Smith put it this way: "Share the gospel wherever you go, and if needed, use words." We should live in such a way that when people see our lives they want to meet our Master. Are you accomplishing your mission on this planet? Are you showing a different lifestyle to those who don't know Jesus? That's our job as aliens.

4. WE'RE FACING A DEADLINE!

We have a mission to accomplish—sharing the good news with everyone on earth. Peter writes that we should be about our mission without delay for a very important reason. In the last words of verse 12 he writes that we must display good deeds so people will "glorify God on the day he visits us." God is going to visit planet earth. The Bible calls that the return of Jesus Christ—and the Bible makes it clear Jesus Christ IS God.

When Paul writes to Titus he says the same thing that Peter is writing. Because Jesus Christ is going to return, it's important that we live godly lives as an example to the people who are living here. The Bible says: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say, 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passion, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:11-13)

We don't know *when* Jesus is going to return, we just know that He *is* coming back. Some deadlines have identifiable dates. When I speak of a deadline on April 15 most of you know I'm talking about the deadline for filing your taxes. But that's not really a deadline, because each year millions of people file for extensions and move the deadline until later. One CPA in our church told me about 25 percent of his clients file for extensions. But you can't file for an extension for the return of Jesus. If you are not a Christian, there will be no way to file for an extension and have another chance to accept the grace of God. For those of us who are aliens, we must be faithful, because we don't know when this deadline will arrive. But you can be sure, Jesus will keep His promise.

CONCLUSION

During World War II, the Japanese were overrunning the Philippines and it became obvious that the Allied forces were going to fall. General Douglas MacArthur was ordered to leave. In one of the most famous military speeches ever given, on February 22, 1942 General MacArthur said, "The President of the United States ordered me to break through the Japanese lines and proceed from Corregidor to Australia for the purpose, as I understand it, of organizing the American offensive against Japan, a primary objective of which is the relief of the Philippines. I came through and I shall return." Most of you are familiar with those words, but you may not be aware of the rest of the story. The remaining American forces and the Filipinos faced death and hardship because of the occupying Japanese. At times it must have been difficult for them to really believe General MacArthur and the Americans would return. To encourage them, our War Department prepared cigarette packs with MacArthur's words printed on the bottom. (Of course,

this was before we knew that cigarettes will kill you.) Thousands of these packs of cigarettes were airdropped and smuggled into the Philippines. Whenever someone read those words on the bottom of the package, they were reminded of General MacArthur's promise. These words gave them hope over the three years of Japanese occupation. Although thousands died before he returned, true to his word, General MacArthur returned to the Philippines on October 20, 1944. Less than a year later he received the unconditional surrender of the Japanese.

Nineteen centuries before a man made a promise to return, the Commander and Chief of the Universe, the Lord Jesus made this promise: "Do not let your heart be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. 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. 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." (John 14:1-3)

We don't need cigarette packages to give us hope—we have His Word and on almost every page He is saying, "I will return. I will return." It should give us hope!

We don't fit into this world. They think differently, talk differently, and act differently—but that's to be expected. We're aliens! We have a mission! Let's take them to our leader—Jesus. Let's live a life of love and forgiveness in front of them, so they'll realize we're different. And let's be busy doing it now because Jesus is coming soon!

OUTLINE

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- (1) A personal war fought within my soul
- (2) A cultural war fought within our nation

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes