

The End is Near

- Pierce Law

In a little less than two weeks on December 21st, 2012 the world as we know it will be over. Well, that's what the Mayan calendar says, right? Wrong. Should this day come and go the Maya will be right as they usually are. Hollywood and a decent portion of the internet will be wrong as they usually are, especially when it comes to science. The problem is that the people who believe the world will end at the end of the Mayan calendar are distinctly not Mayan.

I'm not saying that December 21st, 2012 isn't an important date on the Mayan calendar. That would be wrong of me. However, the hysteria connected to this belief of the end of the world as we know it arises from the peculiar ways that the Maya record time, which coincides with their belief system. Unlike us, who think a text that takes a few minutes to send is a few minutes too long, the Maya had an extremely long perception of time. They used a method called the "Long Count Calendar" to keep track of their many years. This is where it gets complicated.

The Maya called a day a k'in (kin). Twenty of these days were called a Winal (we-nall). Eighteen Winals, or 360 days, made up a Tun (toon), which made up about a year. Twenty Tuns, or about Twenty years, made

up a K'atun (Kah-toon). Twenty K'atuns made a B'ak'tun (Bawk-toon), which made up to about 144,000 days or 394.26 years. The Maya used this system to count the number of days from what they called "The Last Creation." In fact, the Maya believe that we currently inhabit the Fourth Creation.

The Maya believe that their gods made mistakes and wanted to start fresh for each Creation. Some scientists did the math backwards and figured that the date of the most current "Creation" was 3,114 B.C. on August 11th. They counted using a system that looks like this: 00.00.00.00.00. July 4, 1776 looks like 12.8.0.1.13; twelve being the number of B'ak'tuns, eight being the number of K'atuns, zero being the number of Tuns, and so on and so forth down to the number of days being the last set. The reason why December 21st, 2012 is so important on the Mayan calendar is that it looks like this: 13.0.0.0.0, thus making it the turning point to the Thirteenth B'ak'tun. The last time the calendar switched over was on September 18th, 1618, which is a date that is known for absolutely nothing.

So at the end of it all we really have nothing to fear. "We could just call it y2k for Mesoamericans." Yes, this means you still have to buy gifts for each other, file your taxes, and study for your finals. But we'll just have to see what's in store for us when the Mayan calendar clicks over to the next cycle.