

THE MILLENNIUM EVENT

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Brethren, we thank the Lord God for every life experience, every challenge, and every opportunity that is presented before us to walk out our days in the truth of Jesus Christ, with faith in His provision. At all times being encouraged by the promises offered to us, that we have our hope in Christ, being energized and led daily by the Spirit of God.

The period of mankind in which we are living is filled with abundant knowledge and information, yet it is blinded by personal desire and distraction with self. This short sighted view of reality is fundamentally the reason we are now facing potential disruptions within the substructure that holds our mechanized world together. We are talking about the Year 2000 computer bug.

One might consider the presence of the hand of God upon the ironic circumstances of the Year 2000 problem, where just two little digits have caused and will continue to cause global disruption and economic costs exceeding that of any other event in human history. Thousands of articles and books have been published on the topic making it possibly the most widely advertised blunder ever recorded. In some cases, people have literally built whole communities to protect themselves from the supposed impending doom. Companies have created Year 2000 Millennium Crisis Management Centers and governments of countries throughout the world have established policies, legislation, and agencies to manage the problem. Predictions vary, suggesting from 800 billion to several trillion dollars will be spent to correct the computer bug. This figure does not take into account the residual effects of countless lawsuits, loss of trade, and impact on individuals lives.

Plainly, 1 Corinthians 1:27 says it best: *"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."* Praise God! He steers the course of humanity, effortlessly bringing about all change in its proper time. Our hope is that the information provided here helps bring some understanding and encouragement, that in no way we be ignorant nor unaware of what is taking place.

What exactly is the problem?

Over the course of 40 years, mankind has spent trillions of dollars and man hours building the almost unseen global network of computer systems that runs much of our world's infrastructure. Directly controlling or indirectly affecting power, water, sewage, communication, transportation, food production, military, local and national governments, banking and finance. Computers are the nervous system of modern society. The variety of interconnected and independent standalone computers ranges from the prestigious high-powered supercomputers, though the mid-range server class computer, eventually coming down to the personal home computer. All are affected. No computer is entirely immune to what has been termed the Y2K or millennium bug. At 12:00 A.M. January 1, 2000 beginning at the international dateline, very near Fiji and New Zealand, some 17 hours ahead of the Eastern Standard Time Zone, the new millennium will emerge and with it the unknown effect of the Y2K computer anomaly.

The Year 2000 or Y2K issue is a general term that really refers to three separate date-related computing issues, each of which can potentially produce misinterpretations or miscalculations.

Issue #1:

Many computers, applications, and embedded systems (date sensitive devices like microprocessors) that process date information were programmed to represent the year as a two-digit date such as "99" for the year 1999. Why? Because in the early days of computing, any extra digits used precious memory and storage resources, with very high associated price tags. For example, in 1970 one megabyte of internal computer memory (RAM) cost \$3.2 million. In contrast, the same amount of memory today would cost approximately \$5.00. That same amount in disk storage space would today run about ten cents.

Under the assumption that new machines would be designed and old programming practices would be abandoned for new ones, the computer industry at the time did not anticipate the problems and confusion this would cause in the new millennium. Cost, lack of foresight, and the unchanged common everyday practice of people using two digits instead of four to specify a year led to continued procrastination and an apathetic attitude.

Issue #2:

Another often overlooked or unknown element is the fact that the year 2000 is a special-case leap year. Years ending in 00 are not leap years, unless they are divisible by 400. Once every 400 years, there is an exception to the standard rules for determining leap years and so the year 2000 is an exception leap

year. Certain computer hardware and software may not understand the February 29, 2000 date and may not include the extra day. If the computing formula in any one computer for determining a leap year does not include these special-case occurrences, dates following February 28, 2000 will be offset by one day.

Issue #3:

The final issue is caused by old programming methods that used dates to indicate special meaning within a software program. For example, the special date September 9, 1999 (or in shorthand notation, 9/9/99) was often used to indicate such meanings as "Save this data item forever," "Remove this data item automatically after 30 days," or "Sort this data item to the top of the report." There are many such special dates with special meanings programmed by many people over the years, which makes finding and correcting them very difficult. For the most part software programs found on older computer systems have this problem. Programs created for personal computers are unlikely to encounter this problem.

What about personal computing?

There is good news for personal computing. If you use your computer for simple things like accessing the Internet, playing games, or using word processing then you may have very little to no trouble at all.

Most, but not all PCs built since 1997 are Y2K compliant, and all MACs are Y2K ready, but there is a catch. Only the hardware is ready. There still may be problems in the software, stored data, and the transfer of data. These are often revealed when running application programs such as spreadsheets, databases, data tracking programs with calendars, tax or investment programs, online banking, use of the Internet with non-compliant systems, or software with dated passwords.

Making your personal computer Y2K compliant is relative to how you use and rely on the machine. There is not a single fix-all patch but a series of acts that will eliminate or at least minimize any problems. You can go to the following web page by Microsoft for any information and help you might need concerning Y2K and your personal computer:

<http://www.microsoft.com/y2k>

Why is this such a Big Deal?

Many systems assume "19" as the prefix for a 2-digit date; therefore, "00" might be interpreted as 1900 rather than 2000. Other applications simply were not

programmed to handle a date like "00" or "100" and will crash. The result of these errors depends upon how the application program uses the information. For example, is "00" the birth year for a 100-year-old born in 1900 or a child born in 2000? It would matter if his health or life insurance policy were being processed. Imagine receiving a credit card bill on January 15, 2000 that says that your payment is late and you owe 100 years worth of interest on your balance!

The range and type of problems likely to occur are very widespread making it intensely difficult to determine exactly what, where and how much or how little the problem will become. This problem, for example, could create a very serious situation in an embedded microprocessor in a nuclear power plant safety system. On the other hand, the result with regard to other smaller systems may be less serious, but a nuisance nonetheless. The following are examples of areas that might be touched by the Y2K bug.

Source: Technical report from Software Productivity Research, Burlington, Massachusetts, Year 2000 problem probability of occurrence study:

Year 2000 Problem Probability

Bad credit reports due to Year 2000 errors 70%

Loss of local electric power (> 1 day) 55%

Loss of regional electric power (> 1 day) 40%

Loss of international telephone services 35%

Errors in 2000 tax reporting (1099 forms) 35%

Errors with social security payments 35%

Errors in first January paycheck 30%

Errors or delays in tax refunds 30%

Delays or cancellations of airline flights 25%

Loss of local telephone services 20%

Medical or hospital billing errors 20%

Reduction in stock values 20%

Errors in bank account balances 15%

Disruption of stock market trading 15%

Errors in prescription dates 10%

Water shortages/rationing 7%

Corporate bankruptcy due to Year 2000 5%

Food shortages/rationing 3%

Death or injuries due to Year 2000 1%

A survey from USA Today reveals two-thirds of respondents believe that there will be at least an economic slowdown directly attributed to the Y2K problem. At least one-half believe there will be a mild recession, and more than one-third think there will be a strong recession and local social disruptions. About a tenth foresee an economic depression, widespread failures in infrastructure, supply chain delays, and a breakdown of social cohesion.

From an August 19 article, the Gartner Group, an international computer consultant company, reported that most developed countries had made significant progress in achieving general Y2K compliance. These include China, India, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Mexico, South Africa, Switzerland, the UK, and the US. Countries like Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, and parts of Western Europe continue to make significant strides toward year-2000 redemption. A Gartner spokesman reported that Germany, which had been a laggard, has basically at this point nearly caught up to France and a number of large countries in Western Europe.

Based solely on each country's reliance on technology, energy, and trade, Gartner found that Russia has the highest risk for Year-2000 failures. India is in second place for risk, followed by a cluster of countries including Venezuela, Norway, Japan, Taiwan, and Finland. Countries such as Argentina, Mexico, Indonesia, and Hungary, by comparison, are less dependent on technology, communications, energy, and trade; and so are, therefore, at less risk.

When will the year 2000 problem begin?

Most people believe the problem will begin on January 1, 2000, but in fact, the Y2K bug and associated issues are already upon us. For years, computer and information technology industries have been working to correct the Y2K bug. Sifting through literally billions of lines of programming code, they have been

attempting to identify, test and repair, or update innumerable systems. Programs to correct the problem have been written; new programming practices have been put in place; new hardware platforms have been designed; and many products have been discontinued and will not be supported in the future.

Three-quarters of U.S. companies have already experienced year 2000-related failures, according to an ongoing CNN survey of information technology executives at 161 Companies and Government agencies. Among the Y2K failures that have occurred, 92 percent involved financial miscalculations or losses, 84 percent caused processing disruptions, 38 percent led to customer service problems, and 34 percent were supply-chain breakdowns. So far, few of the failures have been visible because they have been addressed quickly and have not caused significant business disruptions.

On August 16, 1999, thousands of London residents lost power for days after the city's top utility distributed smart cards designed to be Year-2000 ready, which turned out to be faulty. According to London Electricity, roughly 2,000 of its PowerKey customers lost power after they tried using new prepaid smart cards that were designed to pay for electricity as customers use it. Roughly 400,000 of the utility's customers use meters that are operated by the smart card, which can be charged at payment outlets around the city.

Reports forecast that Y2K failures will be primarily caused by computer programming with poorly written code fixes designed to correct the Y2K problem. After the first of the year, most of the failures will be due to errors in business transactions running defective code, application programs running for the first time in 2000, non-compliant software, archived data, and insufficiently tested code. At this point, indications suggest it will take at least a year before the full breadth of the Y2K problem can be seen and corrected.

Where are we spiritually?

The problems that we may face are pervasive ones not likely to fade without some residual effects on humanity; but certainly ones filled with opportunity for us to love our neighbor with Godly love and example. Often the Lord allows us to stand in a place of uncertainty outside of where we are comfortable, where confidence in ourselves would be lost. Praise God! Suddenly, when submitted and without strength, He brings illumination and with it a portion of understanding.

As you know, Scripture has depth and dimension at many levels, revealing wisdom in the Lord's time to those He desires. With some concern over being presumptuous, consider the metaphor of the sand and what is being spoken in Matthew 7:26. *"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth*

them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand."

The development of the technology that produced the microprocessor, and its predecessor the transistor, can easily claim its position as one of the most ingenious and innovative inventions in human history. To a large degree, the infrastructure of modern technology in society today, and certainly into the future, is built on microchips. These marvelously designed sub-miniature computing devices are made up of millions of tiny transistors and thousands and thousands of microscopic circuits of precisely etched surfaces, composed in part of copper, aluminum, gold, and other trace elements; but what is most fascinating is they are primarily made of silicon. What is the familiar name for silicon? This element is most commonly known as sand. And what did the Lord say about building your house on sand? He said in Matthew 7:27, "*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*"

There are three characteristics of sand found in the Word. Sand is described as being of countless numbers; one that will smother or swallow up; and as a loose and shaky substance.

1. Genesis 32:12, "*...I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.*"
2. Job 6:3, "*For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up.*"
3. Matthew 7:26-27, "*And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*"

Brethren, we have no special understanding or necessarily believe we have a message to share from the Lord. For that we have relied on the Lord to bring forth illumination through His Word for each individual. The Lord has not been slack in announcing and describing the era that is upon us. We are not speaking solely in regard to the Y2K issue at large, but the time of the age in which we are living. We have watched the previous Middle East crises play out time and time again. We watched what could have been a worldwide financial collapse late last summer and into the fall that started in Asia. Over the last two years we have watched the moral integrity of the highest office in the United States being brought down to the level of a brothel. We watched Kosovo, a possible catalyst to world war; we listen to reports of the theft from the United States by China of vital secrets concerning the making of intercontinental ballistic missiles; we have watched the angry discourse between India and

Pakistan. We have learned that in the past 24 months North Korea, Syria, Iran, Iraq, India, and Pakistan have equipped themselves with weapons of mass destruction; we have stared in horror as our children are gunned down by their classmates; and we now are watching a crisis unfold between China and Taiwan, and we await with possible apprehension the turning of the clock to the year 2000.

How do these events keep from exploding into an even worse situation?

It would seem more than ever that the hand of God is restraining these and other volatile major events from exploding on humanity. He appears to be holding back so many incidents at their most critical stage. One senses in the spirit a pressure building in the heavenlies like a great volcano preparing to burst forth. Just like a natural volcano, where typically there is a lot going on under the surface before an explosion.

The enemy wants to totally destroy, but the Lord is keeping that from happening with great mercy and His hand of protection. Does the vast majority of humanity even realize it has been the mercy of the Lord controlling these things?

The Lord has been sounding a trumpet for many years through His Word and by the gift of prophecy, calling us to personal preparedness. For many years, He has spoken to His Church on this present age and the subject of being a people in readiness, as in the night of Passover. Dressed, equipped, watching, and ready to move at the proper time. Exodus 12:11, "*And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand.*" And again, the Scripture speaks by the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 25:3-4. "*They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*" This is speaking of a prepared people, a people looking to the Lord for their portion. It is a principle, well described in the Scriptures, that we be a people whose portion and provision is from the Lord. Psalm 73:26 "*My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*"

Today may not be the day, thanks to God, but nonetheless it would be good if we take heed to what has already been spoken. Shall we be a people whose lives are built on what the prince of this world can give us? No, for there is a people among the sons of men, who with their hearts are looking for the Bridegroom's return and whose lamps are full of oil. We are called to be a part of that people.

This writing certainly has not been intended that anyone would be disheartened or that the spirit of despair would distort what is being said. Please be encouraged. For our place in Christ is very great! It is a realm of

peace, confidence and endless possibility, not one of fear, apprehension, or anxiety.

Practical Actions:

Taking prudent steps to be prepared is wise before any natural storm. It would be wise to treat the year 2000 in much the same way; but foremost, examine your situation and move as the Lord leads.

Common sense measures would be a good idea, with or without the Y2K event on the horizon. Make copies of all important personal, medical, and financial records. Keep some emergency supplies around: a battery powered radio, matches, blankets, batteries, flashlights, prescription medication, and a first aid kit, etc. If you choose to lay up some extra food, try nonperishable and freeze-dried foods. Consider the weather conditions in your area and have an alternative energy source such as a wood stove (if in a colder climate). If you want to have a small cash reserve and are able, set aside some money now to avoid cash flow problems. If you are uncertain on how to handle these issues, there are many good books available. We are sure the Lord has provided the necessary knowledge and understanding within His Church to minister to those who would desire help.

Let us balance preparedness with an understanding that it is all in God's hands—that if the worst is going to happen, no amount of stockpiling food or weaponry or building shelters is going to stave off disaster. His people should be quick to bind together in love and support one another. Our greatest strength is in the Lord.

