

2K or Not 2K?

A Fun Way to Look at the Millennium

©Copyright 2000, Carroll Williams, all rights reserved.

Millennium or no millennium? Or whose millennium? What did we celebrate? The Christian calendar originally known as the Gregorian calendar attempted to measure time from the birth of Jesus. Was it accurate? Not quite. It missed the mark by four or more years. Modern scholars have concluded that Jesus could not have been born after 4 B.C. In the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 2, verse 1, Christ is said to have been born during the reign of Herod the King of Judea. Herod's reign began in 37 B.C. and ended with his death in 4 B.C. It may even be true that Jesus was born prior to 4 B.C. In any event, the year 2,000 occurs at least 2,003 years after Jesus was born. That being the case, we missed the millennium of Christ's birth and were living in the 21st Christian century for three or more years by the time we reached Y2K.

The Romans measured time *Ab Urbe Condita Libri*, or from the founding of the City of Rome by the brothers Romulus and Remus early on the morning of April 21st 753 B.C. That seemed like as good a time as any to start their calendar. The Roman Calendar was not very good at keeping seasons straight. It suffered from season creep until Summer and Winter slid right around into Spring and Fall. Julius Caesar brought some order out of chaos in 45 B.C. when he modified the number of months and days in the old Roman Calendar. A year later he renamed the Month of Quintilis for himself and called it Julius, or July as we know it. Brutus stuck it to him on the Ides of March, but old Julius is still with us every year in mid summer when we swelter through July.

People lived with the Julian Calendar, which allowed the seasons to slowly creep out of kilter until 1582. That's when Pope Gregory VIII chopped ten days right out to force the Vernal Equinox to arrive on March 21st just as it had in 325 A.D. during the Council of Nicea. The British got into the act in 1752 and moved the calendar date suddenly from September 2nd all the way up to September 14th without batting an eye. Talk about a lost week-end. They simply did away with eleven whole days. No fuss, no bother. Just moved the number right up. Let's say you went to the pub on September 2nd and stayed out past midnight. You got home before daylight, but it was already September 14th. Imagine trying to explain where you had been for a week and a half to an angry wife or girl friend.

What about people who don't measure time from Christ's birth? The Jews measure time since the Biblical creation of the world. They place the event at

3,761 B.C. or B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) The Latin West calls this measurement *anno mundi*, or year of the world, as opposed to *anno domini*, or year of the Lord. The Jewish calendar is already in the year 5,760, or almost up to Y6K. Jews are almost four millennia ahead of Christians in marking time. Christians have missed out on at least three millennia celebrations. At that rate we will never catch up.

The Mayans are not far behind the Jews at 5,119, while the Chinese are running third at year 4697. These folks have already celebrated Y4K and Y5K. Buddhists are in their year 2543, almost half way to Y3K. Ethiopians at year 1993 are seven years behind, and Hindus at year 1921 are over seven decades behind Western Christendom in reaching Y2K. Muslims started marking time from the Hegira, or the flight of Mohammed from Mecca to Medina in 622 A.D. Actually he walked or rode a camel, but they call it a flight because he was in a hurry. They have only celebrated Y1K so far. Muslims at year 1420 won't celebrate their Y2K for another 580 years.

Everybody in the world has some notion about when time began. What is a Millennium? Simply the passage of one thousand years. A thousand years from what? Wherever you want to begin. When we celebrated Y2K, or 2,000 C.E. or A.D. whichever you prefer, we were celebrating 1,000 years since Y1K or 1,000 C.E. or A.D. We all have our favorite beginning point. So what did we celebrate? Whatever we wanted to celebrate.

End

The author grants you the right to copy and use this essay for non-commercial purposes only. You may not change the title, the author's name, the copyright information or any portion of the text.