



December 1999

Hello TORCH people!

Looks like we've an interesting year coming up. We keep hearing more and more on the year 2000. Let's talk a bit about it.

Technically the new millennium will not start until 2001. The year 2000 will not represent the start of anything new but the conclusion and summation of several things They include:

The decade of the Nineties.

The Twentieth Century.

The Second Millennium, AD (or CE).

And Possibly, the Sixth Millennium of world history.

I say possibly on that last one, because I'd tend to fix the important date not from the birth of Christ but his crucifixion and resurrection, placing the millennial date on God's calendar 25-30 years into the future. That is, assuming I'm even close to what's on that calendar.

Since the nineties are a little near for comfort, what does it mean to have lived in the twentieth century? The main Scripture that comes to my mind is Psalm 11:3- *If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?* The twentieth century has been the time when traditions held from the mists of antiquity have fallen aside. Our world has been confronted by forces of change that have stunned and bewildered us.

Family structure and traditions have fallen. The movie, *Fiddler on the Roof* humorously chronicles a Jewish family in Russia as their world begins to change. First Tevye names a list of traditions that allow them to keep their balance, then begins the story where every tradition is challenged and most are swept away. And that was only the century's beginning!

Warfare became much more terrible. Modern war is total with no morality to restrain it. Under the old rules wars were fought soldier to

soldier with few civilian casualties. Civilians are now the main target. A century ago terrorism would have been unthinkable, now it's unavoidable.

Our quality of life has changed. We've seen knowledge explode, yet we may be the most ignorant generation ever in terms of truth and wisdom. The truths we live by are often just the repetition of whatever sound byte is in current fashion. We know prosperity but neither security nor contentment. We elect our rulers but decide nothing about what they do.

We saw a few decades, around the middle of the century, where it appeared venereal disease had been conquered by the combination of moral discipline and antibiotics. But in the victory celebration morals were cast away and by the time it was realized new, untreatable plagues were appearing, society was too deeply in denial over the *conquered* diseases raging at epidemic levels to own up to its folly. Because of this, God's moral strictures were deemed outmoded even as the evidence showed them to be more relevant than ever!

We've seen the automation of our society as machines serve us in ways that would have astounded King Solomon himself but we cannot be sure how much of that automation will collapse when the calendar turns and how helpless it might leave us if it goes down. Isaiah was right, the pride of man is in deep trouble right now!

We're the most well fed generation since Adam's wife ate him out of house and home and we have the best medical skills ever but for the most part it's not making us healthy. We have more discretionary time and more avenues of entertainment than anyone previous but one of our most pressing pursuits is to escape boredom.

Men have been liberated from responsibility, women have been liberated from men, children have been liberated from their parents, the state has been liberated from the church, and the church has been liberated from both God and His Word. In theory it should all be wonderful but nobody seems happy about who they are and what they now have.

At the turn of the century, we sought
equality,
In the teens we fought for idealism,
In the twenties we sampled novelty,
In the thirties we yearned after
subsistence,
In the forties we again fought for
patriotism,
In the fifties we surfeited on
materialism,
In the sixties we went looking for
ourselves,
In the seventies we looked for meaning,
In the eighties we looked for spirit
guides to help us find both ourselves
and meaning which were still missing.
In the nineties we looked for endangered
species to protect, since we'd already
concluded that man had outlived his
usefulness and needed to be replaced on
the earth.
The end of the decade finds mankind
collectively looking for the aspirin, for
he has given himself

a colossal headache!

Perhaps the greatest shock modern man can experience is picking up grandmother's Bible from off the floor where his parents seem to have left it and discovering that it contains the only wisdom that will cover the present situation! Some of the relevant truths:

-Man is basically a sinner, programmed to self destruct, a guaranteed problem requiring divine intervention.

-God owns the earth, He made it, and only He knows how to run it.

-God is smarter than man. As such He is worth listening to. More than that, He is worth listening carefully to, and then doing whatever He tells us to.

-God loves us. We can trust him not only to be good enough but to be big enough for whatever we may need. We can depend on Him to be God.

-God's love is shown not only to us, but through us. Any experience we think we have that doesn't cause us to love others and serve them has something wrong with it.

Is there a relevant practical application for that last point? Certainly! A personal survival plan will get you in trouble, for it isn't nearly big enough to hold miracles. A man wrapped up in himself makes a very small package.

What's in my Y2K kit? I have a little bit of extra food (not enough), a few supplies (not the right ones) and a lot of baggage that needs to be thrown away regardless. The only important thing, however, is the Word of God. The Bible and the God who comes with it are my real secret for whatever lies ahead.

A while back I had my life tested for Y2K compliance. It failed miserably. I sought out the best upgrades available and spent many hours on church carpets downloading from the websites of eternity. I do have to say that everything runs better now but the poor machine is not even 1999 compliant, let alone Y2K and beyond.

But my life does have a secret that allows it to do things it really should never be able to do, a utility module that makes things work. Here it is, *The just shall live by faith*.

I'm never going to have what I need. I will never have the strength or wisdom, or power or holiness to do the work of God. But by faith God will give me something that makes it happen. He does every day already. He will in the year 2000. He'll still be going strong in 2001. And so I'm ready, because I'm tied into the great power of the universe- Almighty God.

Events:

December is the month for lots of programs and events, so we went extra light on planning. Also, our last Friday meeting night falls on the 31st. Since Pastor Frank is planning a watch night service, we know we'll want to go to his party anyway. Keep an eye on the church bulletin and if anything comes up we'll let you know that way.

Promise Keepers men: You should be in section three in the book by this months meeting, talking about integrity in every aspect of our life. This is a key issue and will make the difference of whether we're an example to follow or an illustration of what not to do. There should be lots to talk about on this one.

Christmas Eve can be a time of very loose ends for a single with no family nearby. Gary will be hosting a get together starting at 6 PM. We'll plan on a time of worship and reading the Christmas story in the Bible. Bring a few holiday snacks or finger foods. We'll plan on going for about an hour and a half, then if anyone cares to stay for a movie that's a possibility but those who have family and friends to go to should feel free to do so. Jesus puts the joy in Christmas!

GAH

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