*Back Home by Chris Hardie*

**The confusion of calendars**

Congratulations, you’ve survived another turn of the calendar.

The year 2020 — did you see it coming? (Insert rimshot.)

Contrary to popular belief, you will need to wait another year before the third decade of the 21st century begins. That’s when 2020 will become hindsight. (Insert another rimshot.)

If you’re confused, then you can blame Dionysius Exiguus (also known as Dennis the Short), a 6th-century monk and Venerable Bede or St. Bede, an 8th-century monk later canonized. Both men are responsible for creating the anno Domini (Year of our Lord) or the A.D. calendar system.

Unfortunately, Denny’s calculations got the year of Christ’s birth wrong and Bede’s later calculations that led to counting the years before the birth of Christ as the B.C. era failed to account for the year zero. So 1 A.D. is preceded by 1 B.C.

Because scholars failed to check the monastic excelsis spreadsheet formulas until much later, the result today is that decades begin with the numeral 1 and finish with a zero, which means the second decade of the 21st century doesn’t end until Dec. 31, 2020, and the third decade begins on Jan. 1, 2021.

So 20 years later, that massive partying that you did on Dec. 31, 1999, was all for naught and Prince’s ode to Armageddon should have been “tonight we’re going to party like it’s 20-zero-zero?”

What I remember the most about New Year’s Eve 20 years ago was the Y2K scare. Some thought computers would stop working because of the millennium bug. Survivalists stocked up on guns, ammo, food and toilet paper and waited for the end of the world.

The fear was that older computers and software would recognize 00 as 1900 instead of 2000, shutting down financial markets, disabling power plants and sending jets plummeting to the ground.

The newspaper I worked for at the time moved up print deadlines to finish the paper before midnight and then we published an extra edition just to make sure all of the computers worked. I then spent the rest of the night in a bar to get an early start on my resolutions.

Recently, I mentioned the Y2K scare to an early 20-something and he just looked at me with a blank stare. He had never heard about the end-of-the-world threat. I had to explain that the Federal Reserve estimated our country spent more than $300 billion to prepare and fix the Y2K issues.

Speaking of resolutions, we can thank the Babylonians and agriculture for the first New Year’s Resolutions.

They knew how to party in 2 thousand zero-zero (as in B.C.). The Babylonians, led by Dick Clark, celebrated the New Year for 12 days at the time of the vernal equinox. During this time the Babylonians made promises to their gods that they would return borrowed objects and pay their debts. This was done with the hope that the gods would give them a year of blessings and a bountiful harvest in the breadbasket of ancient Mesopotamia.

The practice of New Year’s Resolutions was also adopted by the Romans. It was shifted with the Julian calendar to January, which was named after Janus, the Roman god of beginnings, doorways and arches.

Janus is often symbolized as a two-faced deity who looks back at the old year and ahead at the new. Janus is also credited for being the first politician because of his ability to change his mind with just a glance. I believe he may have coined the phrase “free beer tomorrow.”

The result of all this calendar confusion is this. If you have any 21st century, third-decade resolutions, you’ve got another year to get ready and to party.

And if none of this applies to you or you think this went too fast, sue me.

I was dreamin’ when I wrote this so it may have gone astray.

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