When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loin

themselves coverings. They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

Genesis 3:6-11

Rewriting History

It was an interesting period in the life of planet earth. Many today have probably forgotten (or never been told of) the turmoil, but for several years prior to January 1, 2000, the press laid down a crescendoing cacophony of headlines and stories warning everyone about how the world was going to end at the moment the clock ticked over to 12:01 AM. The grisly scenario painted was one of airliners plummeting from the sky, utilities ceasing to flow, world-wide markets collapsing, and people starving to death because grocery shelves would be empty. In 1997 *Newsweek* blared,

> THE DAY THE WORLD SHUTS DOWN. Drink deep from your champagne glasses as the ball drops in Times Square to usher in the year 2000. Whether you imbibe or not, the hangover may begin immediately. The power may go out. Or the credit card you pull out to pay for dinner may no longer be valid. If you try an ATM to get cash, that may not work, either. Or the elevator that took you up to the party ballroom may be stuck on the ground floor. Or the parking garage you drove into earlier in the evening may charge you more than your…

In 1999 the magazine ran another alarmist article:

> HELP! Y2K IS ON THE WAY. Think of Y2K as a hurricane being tracked offshore. It might strike the coast with gale force, or it might gradually blow itself out. Both possibilities are supported by plausible stories. Do you board up the windows or not? Y2K is, of course, shorthand for the Year 2000, year of the dread Millennium Bug. Some computers and microchips will read 2000 as 1900, or not read it at all. They might shut down or—worse run steadily, yet give their users wrong results. Unchecked, the bug could…

Even their terminology was inaccurate. The Y2K "bug" was not a bug at all. A computer bug is an error in programming—something the software engineer either missed or did wrong. The early decision to use a two-digit designation for the year, however, was intentional, and based on memory and storage capacity of the computers at the time; back then every tiny byte was precious. January 1, 2000, was also decidedly *not* the beginning of the new "millennium" at all. It was, in fact, the first day of the last year of the *current* millennium.

Then, predictably, when the world did not collapse in on itself, the press quickly covered its tracks with we-knew-it-all-along articles—suggesting that anyone that had believed their earlier journalistic scare tactics was only a hopeless idiot. On January 3, 2000, *Time* magazine told us that

> the Year 2000 Bug turned out to be just another piece of vaporware. To the disappointment of survivalists, millennialists, and journalists everywhere, the much-hyped Y2K bug failed to bring about the end of civilization. At the very least, weren't all those third-world markets still running on old TRS-80s supposed to drag our shiny new mainframes down with them? Apparently not. Having barricaded ourselves in our bunkers with nothing but a pile of gold Krugerrands and a mating pair of hamsters, we now find ourselves asking, didn't any computers, anywhere, crash on the morning of January 1, 2000?

Countless articles during the early days of 2000 claimed that the whole thing had been one big hoax—that, since Armageddon failed to occur, apparently programmers around the world had just put one over on everyone, scaring them unnecessarily and earning for themselves obscene amounts of overtime pay. But this writer knows different, because he lives with someone who played an integral role in making all those necessary software changes.

A Silent Army

She is now retired, but in her then position as a business analyst for an information technology company, for almost a year Linda wrote business designs that guided programmers in making necessary code changes. After the changes had been made, she performed exhaustive, government-mandated testing to ensure that everything was in place well in advance of January 1, 2000. Her clients were financial institutions: banks, savings and loans, credit unions—those serving both individuals and huge corporations. It is quite possible that your ability to withdraw cash from an ATM on 1/1/2000 was directly traceable to the many hours put in by business analysts like Linda and that army of programmers.

In January of that year almost everything went off without a hitch—not because it was all a hoax, but because of all that behind-the-scenes work performed by people like my wife.

Just a Nice Guy

One of the most persistent lies about the Garden of Eden is that it never happened at all. The easiest way for people to be at ease with themselves, to claim that all of this God stuff is unnecessary, is for them to deny their own depravity. If the Garden is just a myth, then man never fell; if man never fell, then there is no need for redemption; if there is no need for redemption, there is no need for Christ. Their conclusion: Christ—if he existed at all—was just another nice guy who taught love and kindness for his fellow man. Nothing more.

Man has a built-in need for his own importance. And, to some, there is nothing more emasculating than admitting one's need for redemption. This is the offense of the cross: that ugly and bloodied tree is the unflinching evidence that man since Adam cannot stand on his own merits, that he is not righteous in himself, but needs Christ's death and resurrection to be once again whole—to reclaim that pristine condition he enjoyed in the early days of the Garden. Denying the need for Christ authenticates their own cynicism, establishes their importance, thus inadvertently contradicting the one they claim is a "good teacher":

> Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds."
>
> *Matthew 16:24-27*

Non-Christians seem to think that the Incarnation implies some particular merit or excellence in humanity. But of course it implies just the reverse: a particular demerit and depravity. No creature that deserved Redemption would need to be redeemed. They that are whole need not the physician. Christ died for men precisely because men are not worth dying for; to make them worth it.

C. S. Lewis

A Fragile Comfort

Modern cynics find comfort in denying all the hard work an army of analysts and programmers did behind the scenes so that their bank accounts and ATM cards would still work properly after January 1, 2000. That lie (like almost all lies) somehow gives them a feeling of importance, of superiority.

Just so, modern cynics of faith find comfort in denying the sacrifice of God's Son. They couldn't live with themselves if they knew the work of Christ to be necessary and yet continued on without Him. Since they are determined to stay their own course, for their own peace of mind they must deny the events of Eden. No fruit, no foul. No serpent, no Satan. No Satan, no sin. No sin, no need for redemption. No need for redemption, no need for Jesus Christ.

But their own world contradicts their self-serving lie. Sin and depravity are indeed alive and well on planet earth. Only those blind to their own sin cannot see it all around them.

© 2012 David S. Lampel. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture is from the New American Standard Bible (Updated Edition). Reflections by the Pond is published weekly at dlampel.com. This is the printable PDF edition; Reflections is also available in HTML AND on-screen PDF.