

Anno Domini!
(or, A.D. vs. P.C.)

Then I heard every creature in Heaven and on Earth and under the Earth and on the sea and all that is in them, singing: "To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever!" The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders bowed down and worshiped.

(Revelation 5: 13, 14)

Recently, my wife and I visited an art museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where one of the guides was giving us background on some of the exhibits. He mentioned that some of the artifacts dated from around 5,000 *B.C.E.*

If you're thinking, "*I thought it was B.C. – where did this E stuff come from?*" congratulations; the subtle infection of political correctness has not yet reached the portions of your brain that monitor the passage of the years.

My first impulse was to say to the guide, "You mean B.C., don't you?" But I stopped myself after my second thought, which was, "Ah, he's probably under orders from his boss; the guy probably can't help it." But inside, the usage still had the same effect as one sour note escaping from an otherwise beautiful symphony.

For the uninitiated, *B.C.E.* stands for *Before the Common Era*, the supposedly "religion-free" way of saying the older term, *B.C.*, which means *Before Christ*. For the current period in which you read this, *C.E.* (*Common Era*) replaces *A.D.*, which is Latin for *Anno Domini – In the Year of Our Lord*.

I first heard the terms being used when I was getting my teaching certificate at one of the local universities here in San Antonio. My Geology professor (who at the time bore an uncanny resemblance to Robert E. Lee... which was all the more ironic since he was originally from New York) started using the terminology, explaining that the years were calculated around (as he put it) "a historical figure..." in other words, the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

At the time, my feeling was *Okay, you're obviously not a believer; you've made your declaration without coming right out and saying so. Very clever – can we please get on with the class?* In my notes, it became a running gag of sorts (*B.C., B.C.E., W.H.A.T.E.V.E.R. ...*)

Now, to be fair, there is some historical uncertainty about exactly *when* Jesus was born. Not even the Romans had the idea of birth certificates in their day, and based on the best current historical reckoning, Christ was born some 3 to 6 years *Before Christ*. Go figure.

The important point, however, is that focal point of modern history is calculated around the birth year – however approximate – of the focal point of the redemption plan of humanity by Almighty God; Jesus of Nazareth, *Jeshua ha'Maschiach*, the Son of God, Second Person of the Trinity, The Word Made Flesh, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Jesus' influence on mankind is still so

strong that even two thousand years later (more or less) the years now use Him as a landmark, and rightly so.

There are, of course, those who disagree; people and organizations both in this country and others working very hard to try and erase all mention of the Lord Jesus from the public dialogue. The reasons are many – ranging from a warped sense of “fairness” (exhibited as fairness to every belief other than Christianity), the concept that one religion is pretty much the same as another, the idea that the very mention of Jesus’ Name reminds people of the moral lifestyle God demands of us (and people still under the influence of the world simply do not like God getting into what they feel is “their business”) to, in extreme cases, naked, open hostility to God Himself. By trying to remove the mention of Him from public discourse (unless as a curse word), these people take the attitude of “ignore it and maybe it will go away.”

When was the last time *you* took that attitude? How did it work out? Ignoring something may be a time-honored American tradition, but that doesn’t mean it’s even remotely effective.

The fact is that *both* systems use as their focal point the approximate birth year of the Lord Jesus. The only difference is that *A.D./B.C.* is open about this point, while *C.E./B.C.E.* is not. To use Jesus’ birth as the focal point of history, yet not acknowledge Him as such, is peevish, hypocritical and, frankly, downright silly on the part of those who insist upon no influence of faith on society.

If you are *that* much of a Christophobe, if you are so freaked out about His influence on the world (that He created in the first place) that you can’t even handle the mention of His Name or the fact that the years are calculated around Him – then find another way to calculate them. Be open about it. Do a quick search of the Internet; there’s a myriad of different calendars you can employ:

- In the Jewish calendar, this is the year 5768. (Oops, I forgot; the world isn’t too happy with Judaism, either, because the same God is worshipped who makes the same moral demands on our lives. That’s why persecution of Jews is regarded today as bad manners – a *faux pas* – when in our fathers’ and grandfathers’ time it was a despicable *crime*.)
- The Muslim calendar has this as the year 1428,
- In China, this is the year 4704 (Year of the Fire Pig),
- The Hindus are in the year 5108,
- And, if you insist upon no religious influence *at all*, you can go by the (approximate) numbers historians and paleontologists use to calculate when human “civilization” first began to emerge – in that case, this is the year 12,007.

If you’ve read some of these messages before, you may have noticed that I end each message (indeed, each page) with the same notation: *For the Glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, © 200-, Anno Domini, Rankin Family*

Ministries, Inc. I play up the meaning of A.D. deliberately because I think that even believers have forgotten its meaning.

They haven't in Heaven. In fact, read Revelation – guess who is going to be praised and glorified right alongside His Father? From Chapter Five on through to the appearance of the New Jerusalem, nearly every exultation of praise given by the court in Heaven, on the Earth or anywhere is directed both “to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb,” or to God the Father and to Jesus. Granted, time means little to those for whom a day is like a thousand years, but their focus is the correct one. In fact, one of the pieces of music you'll hear somewhat frequently this season is Handel's sacred oratorio, *Messiah* – in particular, the chorus *Hallelujah!* whose lyrics are taken from Revelation 19:6 and 11:15. The piece is right for the season – joyous, triumphant and right on the focal point of all of time, almost as if Handel heard a piece of the music of Heaven itself.

May Christmas 2007, A.D. be a blessed one for you, one where you are reminded of what the whole thing is about. I pray 2008 A.D., be a year where you draw closer to God. And in all things, may you find new ways to celebrate the years of our Lord until we all find our home with Him for all eternity.

For the Glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ
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