Apple fixing 1970 bug that bricks iOS devices

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Apple has reportedly fixed a problem with its iOS operating system—users reported that setting their clock back to January, 1, 1970 bricked the device. Apple has not offered an explanation of the exact problem or even announced what it has done to fix the problem, but iOS 9.3 beta 4, now available to developers and public beta testers, appears to solve the problem by disallowing users from setting their clocks to any time before December 31, 2000.

Some have speculated that the problem arose in iOS devices because the

operating system is UNIX based, where the first day of "UNIX time" is, coincidently January 1, 1970. Since the devices keep track of time by noting how many seconds have passed since UNIX time began, they became locked in a loop trying to figure out what time it really was. Others have suggested there was an improper connection to time zones. The bug was discovered by an unknown person or persons who used that knowledge to cause problems for others—postings on 4Chan urged users to set their clock to January 1st, 1970 to get a special Easter Egg, and an even better surprise after they rebooted their device.

Some users have reported that they were able to unbrick their devices by doing a restore from iTunes, though others have said that approach did not work for them. Others claimed that using SIM cards in a certain way remedied the problem, while some claimed all that was necessary was to remove the batteries for some unspecified amount of time. Some users even claimed the problem went away after a certain amount of time had elapsed without them doing anything. While it is not clear how well any of the remedies worked, it was clear that most users opted to bring their phone to a dealer to have it replaced. Also unclear is whether Apple has plans to actually fix the bug in future updates, rather than relying on a work-around.

In addition to preventing the clock bricking problem, iOS 9.3 beta 4 is expected offer to a new Night Shift icon, a new way to track names in the Music app, and a reintroduction of the Apple Pencil navigation tool.

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