

Superman

Superman has returned!

At the time of writing this article (in sermonette format) back in 2006, Superman had just returned to the entertainment news headlines due to the release of the then new movie, “Superman Returns” which hit the theatres that summer.

Many of our local stores were at that time cashing in on the new movie with a “sale” on their DVDs of the 1978 “Superman – The Movie” for \$5.99! What a deal! Such a good deal that I bought a copy. That movie was an old favourite of ours.

It was the first of the series of four movies starring Christopher Reeve as Superman and the Canadian actress Margot Kidder as Lois Lane.

1978? Can this really be true? It seems like only yesterday! But it was thirty-two years ago!

Back in 1978, both Christopher Reeve and Margot Kidder were on top of the entertainment world, with all of it glamour, glitz, fame and fortune.

Included on my bargain priced DVD was a very interesting documentary, “The Making of Superman” which shows the lives of Christopher Reeve and Margot Kidder in more recent years.

Christopher Reeve was no super man in real life. He was certainly not invulnerable like Superman. A 1995 horse-jumping accident left him as a paraplegic! He struggled on bravely; but in 2004 at the early age of fifty-two years old he died of an infection which had originated with a bed-sore. Think of it! Superman died from a bed sore!

Neither was there any real Superman around to protect Margot Kidder. She battled with chronic depression and a bi-polar disorder. She suffered a serious car accident which landed her in a wheelchair. After three failed marriages she turned to drugs and alcohol, fell into addiction and ended up on the streets. She hit bottom when, after being found in a dumpster with her once-beautiful hair hacked off, her friends put her in a psychiatric hospital.

These two superstars went so quickly from the very top of the world to the very bottom!

As I have already mentioned, poor Christopher Reeve was not invulnerable like Superman. But neither are we! None of us! I am feeling my age and I know that many of you are too. Even God's servant, Herbert W. Armstrong was not a superman. He ailed and finally died in January 1986. Like many others of our brothers and sisters, he thought that he would be alive to see the end times leading up to Christ's return to this earth.

The purpose of this article is not, of course, to criticize Herbert Armstrong's erroneous timing; but rather to remind ourselves that human life is short; that *our* human lifetimes are very short; that our windows of opportunity to do our part in God's work is short; and to encourage both you and myself to use our time wisely

End-time Generation?

My very first contact with God's church was way back in 1965 when I was sixteen years old. I thought then that I would never have to die the "first death." Surely Christ would return in my lifetime! Herbert Armstrong believed this too. He often quoted Jesus' words in Matthew 24:32-34:

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when its branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh: so likewise you, when you shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

Which generation was Jesus talking about here? Referring to verse 22 of this same chapter, Mr. Armstrong felt that it was the generation during which it became possible to erase all life from planet earth:

And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

But this begs another question: How long is a generation? Twenty-one years? Twenty-five years? Seventy years?

Here we are today – twenty-five whole years after Mr. Armstrong's death! That sixteen year-old of 1965 is now thinking of the possibility that he might not be around, after all, to see all of the end-time events!

Still, what we must *not* do is to become discouraged, to start thinking that "My Lord delays His coming," to give our remaining time up to leisure and pleasure, to eat and drink with the drunken (Matthew 24:48-49), or to give up trying, working and participating. On the contrary, what we *must* do is to make the very most of the time that we have left – our short remaining window of opportunity.

Christ's Food

Allow me to switch tracks a little at this point. There is a good, positive and very well-known saying that is relevant to the topic of this article – the topic of making the most of our opportunities:

Make hay while the sun shines!

What is hay? Hay is food. Yes, animal food, it is true. But what was the “food” of our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ?

In the meanwhile His disciples prayed Him, saying, “Master, eat.” But He said unto them, “I have food to eat that you know not of.” Therefore said the disciples one to another, “Has any man brought Him anything to eat?” Jesus said unto them, “My food is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work.” (John 4:31-34)

The food of the human Jesus Christ was to do His Father’s will and to do His part in completing His Father’s work. Is this *our* food too?

During one memorable visit to a church member – a lady who was not very old at the time – perhaps in her late middle age – but crippled by multiple health problems – she was crying. But her tear were not because of her deformed body, chronic pain and discomfort; but because she was no longer able to do the things that she used to be able to do – because she could not serve God and His church in the same ways she used to. Still, this lady does whatever she can as often as she is able to. You see, her food is the same as Jesus’ food.

Is Jesus’ food *our* food too? If so, we must be eating it... now! We must be doing our Father’s will... now! We must be doing our part in completing our Father’s work... now! Yes now – during our window of opportunity!

Our Work Day is Now!

And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked him, saying, “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”

Before healing the blind man – before restoring light to his eyes, Jesus said this:

“I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” (John 9:1-5)

Jesus had to do the specific work given to Him by His Father – yes, while He was in this world as a human being. Time did pass, even for the human Jesus. Even His window of human opportunity did close! His human “night” did come!

Jesus’ disciples/apostles worked during their individual “work days,” and their “work days” ended too. Their “nights” came at the times of their deaths.

We too must work while it is daytime for us. Our work day is now! Our nights are coming soon, when we will no longer be able to work. When will that be? When will our nights come upon us? At the times of our deaths? Or maybe at the time when the work of God’s church is cut short... perhaps by governments, persecution, enemies, or even by God Himself? We cannot be sure. But God knows! Read what He tells us through Solomon in Ecclesiastes 9:7-12:

Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God now accepts your works.

Yes, physical works, but God’s work too!

Let your garments be always white; and let your head lack no ointment.

The mention of these white garments and the anointment together imply a reference to God's anointed ones.

Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of the life of your vanity, which He has given you under the sun, all the days of your vanity: for that is your portion in this life, and in your labour which you take under the sun.

Yes, it is OK to enjoy life's good things – the blessings God has given us – including the kinds of physical work and pleasure which are limited to our short physical lives.

Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might...

Our physical work and God's work on earth – we must do it now!

For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you are going.

Like it or not, where we are all heading!

I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.

And, as we have seen, not even to the so-called “super men” of this world.

Neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill.

No men of steel; no super men!

But time and chance happens to them all.

Even many superstars like Christopher Reeve and Margot Kidder have learned this sobering truth!

For man also knows not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them.

No man can be sure of the length of “his time” – how much time might be left in his human life. All may seem well right now. We may think that we have lots of time left – lots of time to straighten out our priorities, to get involved, to do our part. But “bad” things can and do happen to relatively “good” people. Illness and accidents can and do happen – yes, even to God’s people – yes, even to the anointed ones wearing white spiritual garments!

It is not my purpose to be a fear-monger. God’s true church is not a fear religion. Our great God is watching over His children; He even knows the number of hairs on our heads; He allows – even causes – what happens to us. So these occasional reminders and warnings are necessary.

So let us go boldly forward! Let us all live balanced lives. Let us all enjoy our lives. But let each of us what we can to find our part in God’s work and let us do it with all of our might!

I will finish this article with a thought-provoking quotation from the man many of us knew as Superman – from the late Christopher Reeve himself. Please think of these words:

**I am getting older,
And time is ticking.
The more time goes by,
The more I feel a sense of urgency,
And I can accept anything –
Anything except for complacency!**

Selah!

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