



THE SIX TRILLION
DOLLAR CHRISTIAN

Presented by

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[You] shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21

Have you ever wondered why people like us enjoy amusing ourselves with fantasies that involve superpeople? For many of us, Clark Kent led the way. He was Superman and when he would remove his thick glasses and don his skin tight Superman uniform with its flowing cape, we knew that the criminals were after him and he was doomed. Batman followed Superman. Now we have the Six Million Dollar Man and the Bionic Woman. And so suppose we would have to put Holmes' erratic computerized robot YO YO in the picture.

I say, have you ever wondered why we fantasize this way? For some odd reason, we don't want life sized, somewhat ordinary heroes, but we manufacture these outlandish creations who are able to do infinitely more than an ordinary person ever could.

May I make a suggestion? I think that when you add Superman, the Six Million Dollar Man, and the Bionic Woman together what you have is a very dramatic confession that ordinary human beings are not able to cope with life anymore. Ordinary life too frequently challenges us with circumstances that go beyond our own endurance, ingenuity, and skill. Thus, we use our imaginations to manufacture a special kind of human being to do the job. In some cases, the beings we manufacture are not really human at all but in general appearance they at least satisfy what we are looking for.

So that's the first suggestion I would like to make regarding all the superpeople who inhabit our fantasy these days—they are a confession that we cannot really cope with life all by ourselves. And here's another—could it be that the develop-

ment of these superpeople is a modern expression of something that resides deep in the human unconscious regarding the presence of a special person in our world who will rid it of evil? After all, the superpeople we are now developing in the realm of our imaginations are nothing new. Examine the consciousness of primitive peoples, and you will find legends about some special kind of man who was able to do much, much more than an ordinary person. Paul Bunyan and John Henry are examples of this in modern folklore. Hercules is an example from the ancient past. The story of the race of Cyclops is another.

All this is worth thinking about, for it helps us understand ourselves better. There's a lot more to the Bionic Woman than meets the eye (obviously), and when we think about her and the Six Million Dollar Man, we understand ourselves and our needs better than before.

Now, all this can be helpful for us as we think about Christmas, for Christmas, the celebration of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the celebration of a person whom we might call the Six Trillion Dollar Christian, if we would want to describe Him in modern language. I use the idea Six Trillion Dollar Christian because I cannot for the life of me begin to imagine how much money six trillion dollars is, and if the Six Million Dollar Man is impressive, the Six Trillion Dollar Christian is just that much more impressive. And if the fantastic superpeople we create with our imaginations indicate our inability to cope with our problems and suggest that we are looking for someone special, Jesus Christ fits right into this picture perfectly. For Jesus came to handle our biggest problem, and He, furthermore, was supernaturally gifted with special power that enabled Him to do the job that needed to be done.

Let's look at one of the accounts of Jesus' birth

-the one found in Matthew 1. When we do, I think we will see that Jesus Christ was in fact a super natural person of extraordinary importance. This is what we read:

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit: and her husband Joseph being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins' " (vv. 18-21).

That's the Biblical record. And I would like to underscore that last sentence-"and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." In this brief sentence the marvelous worth of the Lord Jesus Christ is described and we must look at it very carefully.

The joy which Christmas has brought into our lives over the centuries cannot be explained if Jesus who was born at that time was simply an ordinary mortal. The sentence we have underscored in the material from Matthew 1 certainly announces that He was not. For it declares that His very name was to be an indication that He had a special job to do. The name *Jesus* means *savior*, and the great work which Jesus, born at Christmas, performed was to save His people from their sins.

Perhaps now you can understand why I have suggested that we might call Jesus the Six Trillion Dollar Christian. For He was a Christian not simply in the sense that His name was Christ, but He was the one who became the great representative of all Christians of all time. And this glorious personage,

to whom we are ascribing such marvelous worth, performed a work on behalf of those who believe in Him that is of infinite value.

Other parts of the Bible help us understand the significance of the work which Jesus Christ performed in order to save His people from their sins. Before examining them, it is necessary to go back to the very dawn of human history and recall that at the beginning of our race an event occurred that plunged humanity into an involvement with sin that has turned out to be disastrous.

I am referring to the episode recorded in the third chapter of the book of Genesis. Adam was the father of us all, and he was our representative in a situation of probation and trial. The story of Adam's fall into sin has been etched with a pen of steel upon the consciousness of man, and even primitive people have reflections of this history in their ancient legends. This is not surprising, for this event was real, and though some may scoff at it as mythical imagery, it is the very opposite of myth. Man, who was created as a responsible person before the Lord, voluntarily chose the road of disobedience and evil, and thus rendered himself heir to misfortune, pain, disease, and eventually to death itself.

Today we live in a world that shows evidence of the reality of the fall of man into sin and the curse that followed it. Just to give an example, two scientists are now trying to discover where the time clock that governs the stages which lead to death is located. One of them, W. Donner Denckla, says the time clock is located on the brain. The other, Leonard Hayflick, says it is located in our cells. Which of these gerontologists is right? Who can tell? But what difference does it really make? The point is this: there is a time clock and it is ticking away the life cycle of each of us. Man is as mortal as dogs and trees. And this is because of sin.

So then, the task before Jesus, born on Christmas, was one that was a million times greater than any other task men have ever known. "You will call Him Jesus, Joseph, because He will rescue people from sin." Somehow Jesus Christ had to undo what Adam had done. Adam had sinned and had, consequently incurred a debt of guilt that has been charged to all of us. He was our representative, after all, and in his rebellion against heaven, we find our own. The punishment that fell upon him falls upon us. If Jesus was to save His people, He would have to go back into the past and try to untangle the twisted, sinful mess of evil that man had introduced into the world.

In the book of I Corinthians in the New Testament, there is a description of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ that expresses exactly what we have been talking about. Here we find a description of the work of Jesus Christ in terms that allow us to see Him as the one who corrected what Adam destroyed when he fell into sin.

We read: "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ... Thus it is written, The first man Adam became a living being; that Adam became a life-giving spirit. ... The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven" (I Corinthians 15:21, 22, 45, 47-49).

The parallel between Adam and Jesus Christ is drawn elsewhere in the Bible as well (see Romans 5: 12-19) but for our purposes, the material from I Corinthians is sufficient to show that the Biblical message calls us to observe that Jesus Christ

came to repair the damage that Adam had caused. Thus He became the Savior and thus all those who believe in Him today are delivered from the curse of sin. To be sure, they still experience its effects on the short term, but they know that they will ultimately be raised from the dead in newness of life through the power of the resurrected Christ. Jesus, you see, is infinitely more important than any other human being, and His worth and work are also infinitely greater than that which is performed by the strange creatures who have existed in myth and legend in the past and exist today in the strange world of television.

Now then, how was Jesus able to do the great work He did - how was He able to save His people from their sin? Before answering that, let me just mention briefly what was involved in His performing this work. First of all, He had to live a perfect life. He had to escape the devastating influences of sin in the world; and nothing that He did Himself could ever be expressed sinfully, for then, He would have become nothing more than a common sinner Himself. So the Bible carefully records how Jesus was tempted by Satan at the beginning of His ministry, just as Adam was tempted years before (Matthew 4:1-11). Adam failed. Christ succeeded. He repulsed Satan's attack over and over again and emerged victorious. In addition to His resistance to Satan's temptations, Jesus expressed a life of positive goodness, He cast out demons and healed the sick and preached the word of truth with authority. His own record as a human being had to be impeccably perfect, and it was.

Secondly, in order to save His people from their sins, Jesus had to satisfy the wrath of God against sin. Those who commit sin must be punished. The State of Israel is still searching for those who committed crimes against the Jews in 1941. Several men now living in America, face deportation to

Israel because they participated in the slaughter of Jews in Latvia and other countries in 1941. The State of Israel feels such people must be punished even though their crimes were committed years ago. The years make no difference. Punishment is necessary and appropriate.

Indeed the years make no difference, and Jesus Christ had to bear the punishment that had to be leveled against sin, the amassed sin of the ages. Think of the sinfulness of the human race over the centuries. Think of the crimes committed, the adulteries, the lying, cheating, stealing, the anger, the selfishness. Fortunately, each of us experiences sin in little doses and its consequences in little doses as well while we are in this world. But the Almighty God in heaven sees all, and the sheer ugliness of it and the massive insult to His holiness that it constitutes calls for the exercise of His wrath. If Jesus was to be savior, as Joseph was to be, He would have to bear that punishment. And He did exactly that on the cross. I ask you, how could an ordinary human being ever do that, and live? Jesus paid the price of sin, and He lived to rise again and finally to ascend into heaven.

What is the explanation for this: At Christmas time we celebrate the entrance into our world of a human being, indeed, for He received His human nature from His mother Mary, but we also celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. For this was the substance of the message that was brought to Joseph when he was embarrassed by Mary's pregnancy. He was a good man and he knew that nothing he had done could have caused Mary's condition. So the message came: Mary is with child by the Holy Spirit of the living God. This means that Jesus Christ is the one and only God/man. He is human but He is divine as well. He is the second person of the Holy Trinity in the flesh.

Here is the person who was in fact the greatest man who ever walked the face of our earth. And He is not to be thought of as great only in terms of the great things He did, but He is to be thought of as great in terms of His very person in terms of who He is. There is no other man anywhere of any age whom you and I may legitimately worship.

But we may worship Jesus Christ. Bow down before Him. Kneel and adore Him. This is God with us.

Man cannot save himself from his sin because he's too caught up in the reality of sin himself. He's too weak. But God can save man, and He has through Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son who was born into our world as Jesus Christ, later known as Jesus of Nazareth, supposed by many to be merely the son of Joseph, but in fact the Son of God. Talk about a great person, a great man, this one is the greatest of all.

At the beginning, I talked about Superman, about the Bionic Woman, and about the Six Million Dollar Man, and said that Jesus might be the Six Trillion Dollar Christian. And perhaps you think that it is inappropriate to talk about Jesus this way, because it tends to downgrade the Gospel accounts we have about Him and put them in the same class with other human fantasies. Well, that's a risk I'm running, I guess, but I am willing to take that risk because I think that all the strange stories about superpeople can help us understand our need and understand Jesus more clearly.

I have called Jesus the Six Trillion Dollar Christian for one reason only - to emphasize the infinite worth of His person and His infinite power. In a very real sense, I take such fantasies as the Six Million Dollar Man and the Bionic Woman very seriously for I am convinced that when we fantasize this way, we are actually admitting that what is wrong with our selves and with our world will take more than ordinary human beings can provide. It is to be corrected.

rected. Ordinary human resources are not sufficient to help us. And in the light of the Bible, we may, we must, transfer all this into the realm of the spiritual, and we must admit that ordinary human resources are not sufficient to release us from the grip of sin and help us escape from the inevitability of death.

And if it makes sense to us to describe the saviors we imagine in terms of their worth—such as a Six Million Dollar Man, let us, then, recognize that at Christmas time there came a man whose worth surpasses all our reckoning. To say He's worth six trillion dollars is appropriate only because we cannot imagine how much six trillion is—it's a never, never number. It's more than our heads can handle. But it's astonishingly much. So is Jesus' worth.

And we must remind ourselves, this season, that if the Christmas record is anything at all, it is precisely not like the fantastic stories men have created in myth and legend and now on television, stories about a superhuman being who brought salvation. What we have remembered about Jesus is recorded in the Bible, and the Bible is entirely trustworthy. The messenger who spoke to Joseph actually did, and the message that he brought was 100% true. Jesus Christ, later of Nazareth, still later of Calvary, and later ascended into heaven, was born of a virgin through the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit of the Living God. Jesus Christ is God Himself, and He successfully accomplished what He set out to do: He saved His people from their sins.

And this makes all we have talked about so utterly important for you personally. The great message of the Christmas season is that salvation has entered our world, and there is no word more beautiful than salvation.

Salvation. For the individual Christian, salvation means release from the sentence of eternal death. *The wrath to come*—how this idea broods over the

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pages of the New Testament! Again and again, the apostles mention it, and when they do, they rejoice that those who believe in Jesus Christ will escape it. But the wrath to come is still long way away (at least we tend to think it is) and sometimes it is difficult to become enthusiastic about a salvation that will become important years down the road. But, of course, salvation is more than salvation from the future wrath. Salvation begins today. The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ experiences renewal right now. Today! Salvation from sin means escape from sin's domination. It means being a slave of righteousness and this is a blessed slavery.

So when you think of the outlandish and absurd television shows that play games with human life and suggest that there are those superbeings who can do great things, view this as an indication of the deep yearning within our lives to believe that surely there has to be somebody who is not hampered by the usual human limitations and who is able to do superior things. There is something pathetic about our watching such foolishness. For we really do need someone special to save us, but none of these imaginary beings ever will.

But Jesus can. Though He is one of us, He is more. Jesus is God. Jesus is the Savior, and He will save you, if you confess your sin, and admit that only His perfect, finished work can save you. Turn to Him. Believe in Him.

There is a Savior—this is the great message of Christmas. His name is Jesus. Believe in Him and claim His salvation and tell the world this gloriously happy news.

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