

“*Superman and Green Lantern ain’t got nothin’ on me.*”
Donovan, *Sunshine Superman*, 1966

“*...Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, which God hath prepared for them that love Him.*”
Paul, *I Corinthians 2.9*, ca. 55 A.D.

As a kid I loved superhero comic books, but my Dad feared for my grades. For bringing home one lousy C in seventh grade geography, he threw out a collection I could have sold for big bucks later on.

Batman got old because he didn’t have super powers, but I’m still a fan of Superman and Green Lantern. The long hold these characters have had on popular imagination (certainly on mine) suggests a deep human longing for something they represent.

Have you never imagined being faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to bend steel with your bare hands, and leap tall buildings with a single bound? Wouldn’t it be fun to play tag or baseball in the stratosphere without needing wings, aircraft or broomsticks, or even breaking a sweat?

What if bullets bounced off, germs couldn’t sicken, fire couldn’t burn, time couldn’t age, and a chunk of kryptonite could be whittled into a yo-yo? Wouldn’t it be cool to move a mountain without touching it? What about seeing through, even passing through, walls?

Let’s go see the ocean floor, the surface of Venus, or the core of a star. We’re not fazed by anything, however extreme. Let’s go visit a planet somewhere just outside our galaxy to watch those spiral arms rising or setting, filling the local sky. Light speed is limited, but we’re not. We’ll be back in time for lunch.

I may have an overactive imagination, but I doubt that I can out-imagine God. The Bible hints at things like this. While He was with us, Jesus turned water to wine, healed the blind and lame, fed multitudes, walked on water, and raised the dead.

Even so, except for His brief Transfiguration, He mainly appeared to be an ordinary man doing extraordinary things. After His Resurrection, things got *really* interesting.

The grave clothes in His empty tomb appeared undisturbed, as though He had passed right through them while getting up (yet He paused to fold up the head cloth separately). He didn’t roll away the stone sealing the door of the tomb; He simply *left*. (Angels rolled away the stone afterwards so the disciples could see His empty grave.) For the next fifty days, He kept appearing and disappearing in front of hundreds of people, indoors in locked rooms and outdoors on roads and at the seaside.

When He was present, He seemed to have a fully human body, with nail marks in His hands and feet and a spear wound in His side. He cooked and ate, and showed off His flesh with the bones underneath; this was no mere disembodied spirit.

He came and went mysteriously; nobody quite saw what happened, except for the day He said goodbye and ascended into the clouds. The angels passed on His promise that He would come back someday, just the way He left.

Amazing, but after all, Jesus is God. Even Superman and Green Lantern couldn't perform such feats. The Bible promises believers that our resurrected or raptured bodies will be like Jesus' own. He promised that with faith we could command a mountain to change its place, and that we would do works greater than any He displayed back then.

I don't want to trivialize this staggering prospect by comparing resurrection glory to comic book super-heroes, but I think much of the subconscious appeal of these two characters is that at some level we sense the promise of doing everything they can do and more besides.

During Jesus' Millennial reign, there will still be physical tasks to perform on the restored earth. There will be a literal ungodly mess to clean up right after the Tribulation and Armageddon. If that job is assigned to us glorified humans, I expect we might need more than just trucks and front-end loaders.

I apologize for picking on South Carolina, but in my travels there, I've been dismayed by the roadside eyesores that mar its natural beauty. I've spent dull car trips fantasizing about flying high above its highways in the early Millennium, towing an accumulating mass of trash and uprooted billboards behind me. Superman carries things in his arms as he flies, but he can hold only so much stuff. Green Lantern could do the uprooting and towing with his power ring, but I wouldn't need one.

I'd take the trash hundreds of miles away to some roomy concrete surface like an abandoned Air Force base on a prairie. I'd rip it all apart, tons at a time, and sort it for recycling or disposal, all without even touching it. When I was done there, I'd fly to Staten Island to do it again at the New York City dump, and turn the place into a park.

I'd love assignments like that. An army of guys like me could whip the whole earth into shape for the King to reign for a thousand years.

There will be no dull boys in the Millennium, so I expect there will be play as well as work. Imagine playing football with superhuman strength, speed and agility. No need for pads or helmets (unless just for realism). No flying or fancy stuff allowed during the game (except maybe for the officials). By rule, you have to limit yourself to the abilities of a perfect human body. The same with extreme skiing or climbing: enjoy yourself - if you goof, nobody gets hurt.

All this is fun to think about, although I have no idea whether my fantasies are anywhere close to the truth. The best I can imagine might pale before the reality. However, I'm pretty sure I imagine a much better future than John Lennon ever did.

Or maybe the best of it unfolds over the eons. Psalm 84 (excerpts from verses 4-10) hints at this: *“Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them... **They go from strength to strength**... For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”*

That last verse reminds me of something I've often thought myself: I'd rather wash the dishes at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb than have all the kingdoms of this world, even with super powers thrown in.

It has occurred to me that there are further parallels between the superhero legends and God's far more amazing promises. There are also astonishing and humbling differences between the comic book realm and the divine reality.

Superman's natural parents, Jor-El and Lara sent their infant son through space to Earth to save him from Krypton's impending destruction. As a bonus, their selfless act of love gave young Kal-El his super powers.

In the Green Lantern backstory, Abin Sur was Hal Jordan's immediate predecessor as the Green Lantern for Space Sector 2814. Badly injured during the crash-landing of his space craft on Earth, and realizing he was dying, Abin Sur willed his power ring to seek out a human replacement chosen for his absolute fearlessness. The ring chose Hal Jordan.

Jesus operates far beyond the parental motives of Jor-El and Lara (who were doomed to die with Krypton in any case). Through His own selfless act of divine Love, Jesus came to Earth to save us (and Earth itself) from destruction. As a bonus, His salvation includes a promise of fantastic powers to come.

Abin Sur had to die before Hal Jordan could succeed him, but his death was an accident, not an intentional sacrifice planned from eternity past. We could not *succeed* Jesus in this sense, but we will become like Him. *“Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.”* (I John 3.2)

Like Hal Jordan, we need have no fear, although not because we have mere courage, but rather because we have faith in the perfect Love that casts out fear (I John 4.18). We are chosen, not by a fictional power ring, but by a real Jesus Christ who implores us to choose *Him* in return.

A whole Universe awaits our decision.