

Cross Current



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SUPER, NATURAL

Call it a bad case of comic timing.

In July 1990, the writers of *Superman* finally had Clark Kent propose to Lois Lane, capping a courtship that began in 1938. Lois was ecstatic. “Clark,” she gushed, “I’ve already decided. Yes... I want to share my life with you.” Soon after, in *Action Comics* #662, the starry-eyed reporter learned who Clark really was.

Fans rejoiced. Faster than a speeding bullet and more powerful than a locomotive, Superman sales soared. Many media outlets even treated “the wedding of the century” as real news. Then, suddenly, DC Comics told the writers to leave the story alone.

It turned out ABC television was working on a new series called *Lois and Clark, the New Adventures of Superman* but production was way behind schedule. To capitalize on the hype surround the superhero’s wedding, executives wanted the season premiere to coincide with the comic book nuptials, which meant postponing the wedding.

Needing something extreme to keep fans from getting antsy, the writers decided to “kill” Superman. The news broke on the cover of *Newsweek* magazine and soon spread around the world, creating even more buzz than the wedding had. Speculation was rampant about what would finally do in the Man of Steel.

It wasn’t archenemy Lex Luthor or kryptonite but Doomsday, a grey and white monster described by writer Don Jurgens as “primal rage incarnate”. At the end of an epic battle, both Superman and Doomsday fell down dead. The comic book — dated November 18, 1992 — came encased in black plastic with a poster and a black arm-band. In its various printings, more than six million copies of the



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comic book flew into the hands of avid collectors.

In the following issues, Superman appeared only as a corpse while several figures claimed to be his superhero heir, including a robot, an alien and a man in an iron suit. Finally, in October 1993, a benevolent force from beyond earth rejuvenated Superman’s lifeless body.

That year, the *Superman* TV series was a hit and sales of all comic books topped \$1 billion. But readership soon dwindled. When Superman’s wedding finally happened in 1996, comic sales were disappointing. Today, they’re down almost 70 per cent and the companies make most of their money from superhero movies.

For years, writers have drawn parallels between Superman and Jesus: the hero is sent to earth by a loving father, raised by a humble man and his wife, and known for his strong moral code. When the time is right, he uses superhuman abilities to save the world.

Interestingly, Superman’s creators, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, were Jewish. Some think the superhero was modelled after Moses, and his Kryptonian name, Kal-El, resembles the Hebrew phrase “voice of God”.

Regardless, we — the church, the Bride of Christ — need to say to Jesus, “I’ve already decided. Yes... I want to share my life with you.” But there can be no postponing of our commitment. Time is short. Opportunity is easily lost. Besides, it’s only when we make that commitment that we truly learn who Jesus is and how his power shapes our lives and the world around us.

And in a real sense, that spiritual union is linked to his death. We live for him because he died for us, after an epic battle with evil. Though many still act like Jesus is dead — and lots of things vie for control of our lives — the only real source of power raised him to new life. Not even primal rage incarnate could keep him down. God uses that same power to change our hearts and our circumstances.

“Christ suffered for our sins once for all time,” Peter says. “He never sinned but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death but was raised to life by the Spirit. So... keep on doing what’s right and trust your life to the God who created you, for he will never fail you.” (1 Pet. 3:18;4:19)

Next time it seems like you’re facing Doomsday, don’t be afraid to let God take you back to the drawing board.