

# The Cameo King

Easter 2024

Before his death in 2018, Stan Lee was known as the king of cameos. He had over 130 acting credits, but it's in the MCU where his appearances were most appreciated. He showed up 38 times in Marvel movies.<sup>1</sup> He was a WWII general, a mental patient, a dog-walker, a galactic barber, an oblivious librarian, a FedEx driver, and once mistaken for Larry King, another frequent cameo actor.

His flashes on the screen almost never had any bearing on the plot. They were meant to be a fun easter egg for fans. The truth is he had almost nothing to do with the movies. Even though he was often listed as an executive producer, it was a purely honorary title.<sup>2</sup> And, there is substantial evidence that Stan may have really created many of the iconic characters he laid claim to.<sup>3</sup>

On a hill called Calvary, Jesus Christ died on a Roman cross. He hadn't done anything wrong. He never misrepresented Himself - He never stole any ideas or cheated anyone. He had only done good His entire life. He was God come in human flesh - absolutely perfect in every way.

Human beings, on the other hand, are absolutely *imperfect* in every way. That's why Jesus came to earth. Because God *loves* every man, woman, and child who has ever been conceived. We need to be saved from our guilt, saved from our imperfections, saved from the sins that disqualify us from heaven. And so, Jesus came to die in our place, taking our sin and the debt we owed, and giving us the riches of His righteousness, if we would simply believe on Him and join the family of God.

On the Sunday morning after He died, Jesus came out of the grave. Others had been raised before, but Jesus was the first to rise and never die again. After Jesus rose, He made a bunch of cameos. In one, He seemed to be a gardener. In another, a traveler. In another, a cook. But these weren't just throw away scenes. Each one of them mattered very much to the people He encountered. Each one of them was full of purpose. Each one of them advanced the plot of God's story - His drama of redemption.

Why did Jesus make these appearances? Was He taking a victory tour? Politicians sometimes do that after winning an election. Was it guerrilla marketing? Brands or movies sometimes do this when they want to get attention. Did Jesus need to generate buzz to gain market share?

When you read through these encounters, some of His visits don't seem to make a lot of sense. You wonder why in the world the risen Christ would "waste" His time with such small potatoes. His cameos come in totally unexpected places, *one* time to a large group of 500 people,<sup>4</sup> but otherwise almost always to very small groups - out of the limelight - no fanfare or pomp.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thepopverse.com/stan-lee-mcu-marvel-superhero-movie-cameo-ranked>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ign.com/articles/2012/05/15/how-much-did-stan-lee-make-on-the-avengers>

<sup>3</sup> Abraham Riesman *True Believer: The Rise And Fall Of Stan Lee*

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:6

But these meetings were very important to Jesus. They were *essential*. They are very personal, very tender, very sympathetic, and loving. The Lord of glory - the One true God, Who conquered death and the grave, Who holds the universe in His hand - took the time (*a bunch of times*) to show His disciples that He loved them and had a message for them and intentions for them. A new life for them.

In each encounter the Lord helps His disciples, either by giving them encouragement, or direction, or commission, or correction. Let me read to you the opening to some of these cameos.

**Matthew 28:1, 9-10** - **After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to view the tomb...<sup>9</sup> Just then Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" They came up, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus told them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there.**

**Matthew 28:16-20** - **<sup>16</sup> The eleven disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup> When they saw him, they worshiped, but some doubted. <sup>18</sup> Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."**

**Luke 24:13-15** - **<sup>13</sup> Now that same day two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> Together they were discussing everything that had taken place. <sup>15</sup> And while they were discussing and arguing, Jesus himself came near and began to walk along with them.**

**John 20:19** - **<sup>19</sup> When it was evening on that first day of the week, the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked because they feared the Jews. Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, "Peace be with you."**

**John 20:26** - **<sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were indoors again, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."**

**John 21:1, 4-5** - **After this, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples by the Sea of Tiberias...<sup>4</sup> When daybreak came, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not know it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup> "Friends," Jesus called to them, "you don't have any fish, do you?"**

"Jesus revealed Himself." "Jesus came near." "Jesus came [and] stood among them." "Jesus met them." "Jesus Himself came near and began to walk along with them." "Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them."

He came. He found these beloved friends of His, whether they were on a dusty trail miles outside of Jerusalem, or out on a boat at sea or hiding in a locked room. Jesus came. Jesus drew near to reveal Himself and speak to them and make things right. He came to show them the truth and invite them to join Him in His mission to save more and more people out of death and the grave.

Since 1987, when Super Bowl champions are interviewed after the game, one of them always says: "I'm going to Disneyland!" After Jesus conquered death, He said, "I'm going to find My friends."

Jesus Christ is a *personal* Savior. I'm sure we've all heard that phrase - Jesus Christ the *personal* Savior. In 1990, *Depeche Mode* released their song *Personal Jesus*. I've never heard their version, but I love Johnny Cash's cover.

*Your own personal Jesus  
Someone to hear your prayers  
Someone Who cares*

He does much more than hear our prayers - He *answers* them. And He not only cares, He protects and provides for us. He makes plans for us. He walks with us. He includes us in His work.

In the days following the resurrection, Jesus showed *again and again* how much He cares - how He really is a personal Savior who is *looking* for people who need saving. Mary needed comfort. Jesus found her and consoled her. Peter needed restoration. Jesus found him and reconciled him. Thomas needed an attitude adjustment. Jesus gave it firmly but lovingly. Cleopas and his companion needed hope and clarity. Jesus walked with them and unfolded hope to them, mile after mile, helping them understand the truth. At least three times, He sat and had a meal with His friends, spending time with care and purpose and kindness and love. That's our Savior!

These cameos weren't only to make them feel better. It was also to commission them. He said, "You're My people. Because I'm alive you can have hope and purpose and assurance. And this salvation thing I've been talking about is *not* just for when you die - it's for right now."

Jesus told them to go make disciples. He asked them to be eye-witnesses. He told Peter to feed and shepherd the Lord's lambs. He told them to live by faith and in the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup>

Before Easter Sunday, their lives had been shattered. They were hopeless and afraid, confused and despairing, not knowing what to do next or how to do. Then Jesus comes, and takes the time to put their lives back together. He gives them a new trajectory that would go beyond their lives, it would continue in an unbroken chain for thousands of years.

You see, it wasn't just the 11 disciples and a few others that Jesus wanted to reach after Easter. He *kept* finding people and revealing Himself and drawing them in. Paul, writing in 1 Corinthians, lists different people and groups that Jesus appeared to after the resurrection and he says this:

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew 28:20, John 21:15-16, John 20:22, 29

**1 Corinthians 15:5-8 - <sup>5</sup>...he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup>Then he appeared to over five hundred brothers and sisters at one time; most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup>Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. <sup>8</sup>Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, he also appeared to me.**

The cross was more than just settling a bill. It was more than a battle against the devil. It wasn't just a hoop Jesus had to jump through. He loves you *personally*. It was *your* sin on His shoulders, but it was His *love* for you that held Him there. He loves you the way He loved Peter or Paul. His desire is to specifically save *you* and then fill your life with His goodness and His joy and His heart and His mind and then use your life for His everlasting purposes.

The family of God doesn't have a limited membership. There are just 780 players in the MLB. Just 450 in the NBA. Did you know there's an ultra-exclusive dining club at Disneyland? It's called Club 33. It's limited to 500 members and right now there are 800 people on the wait list. It can take a decade before your chance to join comes up and when it does, you'll need to pay a \$25,000 initiation fee, followed by \$12,000 every year.<sup>6</sup>

What's the cost for joining team Jesus? The price has already been paid. Here's how you join:

**John 3:16 - <sup>16</sup>For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.**

**Romans 10:9 - If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**

Jesus is a Savior Who *loves* to save, Who *still* saves, and Who *still* appears to the lost of this world, the hopeless of this world, the fearful and the searching. The King of kings spends His time saving.

Did you know there are many reports of Christ appearing to individuals in the Muslim world today? Here is an account from an interview with a missionary called Yazim who works in the middle east:

*"Yazim began by stating, 'God is moving inside the Middle East with dreams, visions, and personal visitations.' He shared the story of a man who lived outside of an unnamed Middle Eastern city known for vast opium use. "This man said 'A man wearing all white knocked at my door every night and I couldn't look at him because his face was so shiny and bright,'" Yazim recalled. "When he would come inside, he asked me to write down what he said. The next night, he would come again and this went on for a whole month." Yazim asked the man, "What did you write?" The man showed Yazim his notebook. In it was written: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made." "He had the whole book of John verbatim*

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.wikihow.com/Join-Disneyland-Club-33>

*in his notebook," Yazim revealed. "Jesus visited him every night until he finished the book. The amazing thing is, the man actually asked us, 'who was this man that visited me?'"*

We might wonder why the Lord didn't identify Himself to this man. The reason is because He now shows Himself *through His followers* - through you and I who are Christians here this morning. In His resurrection cameos, Jesus more than once said, "I'm sending *you* as a witness. I'm sending *you* to spread the Good News. I'm going to use *your life* to save others." *You* are the cameo now because *you* have been made a part of the Body of Christ and the Holy Spirit lives in you. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:20 that God makes His appeal through us.

We don't see Jesus, visibly today, the way Peter and Paul and Cleopas did. But we can see Jesus on the pages of Scripture. He is revealed in the volume of the book. We see the testimony of the risen Christ in the lives of Christians who are walking with Him and carrying His message.

The message of Easter is clear: Jesus is the Messiah and He loves you and wants to reach you so that He can share the resurrection *with you*. Of all the things He could be doing, *He chooses to come near to you*. In John 21, while some of the disciples are out fishing, there's Jesus just hanging out on the shore, prepping a fish breakfast, tending the fire, waiting for them. Because *that* was the most important place He could possibly be at the moment.

If you're not a Christian here this morning, please understand that God loves you and wants to save you. I know that's true because the Bible proclaims it and shows it in great detail. If you reject His offer of salvation, then you are choosing to keep the debt of your sin. And the cost for that sin is *death*. Physical death *and* eternal death. But you can escape your debt today by receiving the free gift of salvation.

If you *are* a Christian, be reminded that Jesus is *still* your personal Savior. He still has intentions and callings and opportunities for you. He wants to commune with you and show Himself through you.

A few film directors are famous for appearing in their own movies - Alfred Hitchcock and M. Night Shyamalan most famously. The other actors in those movies may have roles to play, but they're not the director. Our heavenly Director has invited us to join His cast - to play a part in His masterpiece. He's given us a script, He gives us direction, He's called out "*Action!*" And we continue His story.

Stan Lee made two cameo appearances after his death: *Captain Marvel* and *Avengers: Endgame*. But, *Marvel* has officially made a policy: No more Stan Lee cameos.<sup>7</sup> After His death, Jesus made *many* cameos. He continues to reveal Himself thousands of years later, because Jesus is *not* dead. He is alive. And He is coming *back* one day in a worldwide appearance. All the plot of human history is leading to that moment when the King returns and sets up His Kingdom. Meanwhile, He comes near to each individual on earth, desiring to save, to sanctify, to assist, to set apart, to transform our lives with His love and grace. To share with us everything that belongs to Him.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://insidethemagic.net/2021/07/marvel-no-more-stan-lee-cameos-jm1/>