

The whole reason for Jesus hanging on the cross was to serve us, and the ultimate act of service was to give his life paying a ransom – a debt. And that debt is what we have built up for ourselves as we reject God and put ourselves first, as we hurt others, lie, cheat, steal, knock others down with our words, or bear bitterness in our hearts. It is these things that Jesus goes to the cross for, paying for them with his body and soul. Jesus experienced

the rejection of God at the cross so that people like you and me may never need to. And we know he was successful, because he rose to life again three days later having defeated death. Our hero stands up with rays of sun shining all around, and he is awarded the key to the City of God, allowing anyone who wants to enter to come in.

Because of what Jesus did at Easter, anyone who trusts in him is welcomed into a place we have no right to be: God's presence.

These people will find themselves welcomed into the courts of

heaven for eternity, face to face with God, experiencing his love. And they will stare at each other, each thinking the same thing: *"How did someone like me end up in a place like this?"* And the answer will be, **"Jesus got me in. He made me right with God because he paid off my debt on the cross at Easter."**

The Bible puts it like this:

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"

(2 Corinthians 5:21)



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*How did
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STEPHEN NEAL

Over the years a cliché has arisen, especially in children's movies. The film opens with a dramatic scene...

The main character comes flying in, then you hear a record scratch, everything pauses, and a voice-over says something like, "Well, this is me. You're probably wondering how I ended up here." And then the film unfolds, explaining exactly how the character got into that situation.

You may have had that feeling in your own life. You find yourself in a situation and you look around and think, "How did someone like me end up in a place like this?"

Maybe it's positive: a promotion party at work, a wedding ceremony with the person of your dreams, or an awards evening where you're unexpectedly recognised for doing something amazing.

But it might also be negative: you end up in a hospital bed (ironically, that's where I'm writing this), in a law court, or maybe you've fallen on hard times and find yourself at the food bank. As you walk in, you say to yourself, "I never thought I'd end up here."

The wonderful, yet sobering, true message of Easter is that a way has been

made for us to enter the most amazing place – the kind of place that leaves you thinking, "How did someone like me end up somewhere like this?" And it's all because someone else ended up in a situation that you would never expect them to be in.

Jesus Christ is a historical figure who most people would say was a good man, regardless of their thoughts on religion. He was compassionate, caring, and loving. The Bible's eye-witness accounts tell

us that he miraculously healed the sick, fed multitudes, released people from demons, and even raised the dead. He is the hero of the story. And in hero stories, what do you expect to see? You expect to see the hero praised and awarded, given keys to the city, and celebrated.

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Yet, at Easter, we see the opposite. The hero, Jesus, is nailed to a cross. This is completely the opposite of how we would expect to see a hero treated.

If we go back just a few hours before that, we read about how one of Jesus' best friends betrays him. We read of his arrest by his jealous enemies who feel threatened by his claim that he's the Son of God. And so they seek to have him killed and, in their eyes, they succeed. It looks like a defeat for our hero.

But, as with all the best hero films, what looks like Jesus' lowest point is actually his most triumphant moment. In reality, the cross of Jesus wasn't an accident that might leave us wondering, "How did a man like Jesus end up in a place like that?" Jesus tells us exactly why he ended up

there. He tells us what his very purpose was shortly before his crucifixion:

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"

(Mark 10:45)

