



# Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark

## Accessing the Power of God

**A**ugust is the height of summer. And summer spells “b-l-o-c-k-b-u-s-t-e-r” in the movie industry. So, it’s appropriate to soak in a rip-roaring adventure, none being better than *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

As Philip Marlowe epitomized the private detective of the 40s, and Humphrey Bogart exemplified Marlowe (as in *The Big Sleep*), so the 80s gave us Indiana Jones the image of the determined yet carefree adventurer, portrayed by Harrison Ford. Originally scripted to be called Indiana Smith, and changed on the first day of production to Jones, can we really think of anyone other than Indiana Jones when we think of tombs and arks, whips and fedoras? And to think that apart from a commitment to *Magnum PI*, Tom Selleck would have been Indiana Jones. Instead, Ford was cast less than three weeks before photography began, and this gave him a second career-defining role (after Han Solo in *Star Wars*).

The Oscar-winning classic and highest grossing film of 1981 *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, opened with a memorable extended scene. The leather-jacketed Jones is in pursuit of a gold relic in a tomb in South America. Getting past the initial booby-traps that have claimed other earlier archeologists and mercenaries, he attains the altar upon which the small golden head rests. He carefully swaps a bag of sand for the head, but despite this trick still triggers the final trap: a rolling boulder the size of a truck about to crush him. When he finally gets out, with the help of his trusty bullwhip, he finds his arch-enemy, the French Belloq (Paul Freeman), waiting with a hostile tribe of headhunters. Defeated, Indiana has to relinquish the relic. The classic shot, foreshortened via long telephoto lens, of Indy running in front of these native Indians before diving into the river is one seared into the American movie-goers memory.

Whew! What a way to start a movie.

And like the typical James Bond movie, this scene has little to do with the rest of *Raiders*. Yet, it serves its purpose -- to introduce the person and character of Indiana Jones. Here is someone who lives on the edge of danger and survives by the seat of his pants . . . and by his wits.

When we next see Indiana Jones, he’s wearing a suit at his real job as a college professor, writing with chalk and winning with charm. But when the US Army tells him that the Nazis are seeking the Lost Ark that Moses used to store the Ten Commandments, he rises to their call. Another adventure beckons. And he is just the man for it.

From America to Nepal to Cairo, Indy teams up with old flame Marion Ravenwood (Karen Allen) and paves a trail that is anything but silent. As *Raiders of the Lost Ark* progresses, the action comes thick and fast. The world of the late 1930s is changing, and the Germans want the ark because it is supposed to provide to its bearer the power of God. But Indiana Jones symbolizes all that is good about America in contrast to the highly efficient but evil Germans. With scintillating scenes like the marketplace fight and standoff with the giant scimitar-bearing thug, and the truck chase culminating in Indy being dragged on his belly, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* is a modern-day classic, yet another winner from the Spielberg-Lucas stable.

Indiana Jones is the kind of character you want in your corner in a bind but don’t want at your doorstep dating your daughter. He is a true modern cowboy,

with a wry asymmetrical smile, a one-liner response to every situation, and an ability to face anything . . . except snakes! His adventurous spirit is symbolized in his response to how he would go after the truck bearing the ark, "I don't know, I'm making this up as I go." But his adventure and flexibility are tempered and controlled by his dogged determination. When he sets his mind to something, he will go at with all his might and gusto. Isn't this the perfect picture of a rugged, trailblazing American!

The iconic Jones can be compared to the illustrious Jesus. Both are central to their stories, though Jesus is central to the story, human history. Both are determined to complete their missions. Where Jones challenges Nazis and natives; Jesus defeats demons and death. Jesus demonstrates an ability to snap off a quick response to those, like the Pharisees and Sadducees, who were trying to trap him (Matt. 22:18-21, 29-32, 41-46). His responses were wise; while Jones' specialized in the witty retort. But, ultimately Jones is the likeable rogue compared to Jesus the righteous savior (2 Pet. 1:1). Indiana was in it for himself. Jesus was in it for us. In our fantasies we may want to be like Indiana, but in reality what are we doing with Jesus? It is certainly easier to be like Jones than Jesus. His is the more flamboyant life. Yet, for all the treasure he unearthed, none compares to the treasure that Jesus has (Matt. 13:44). And by choosing to be like Jesus, following him, we can share in that treasure stored up for us in heaven (Eph. 1:14, 18). That is something we won't get from any Indy fantasy.

As the climax approaches, Indiana and Marion find themselves tied together to a pole, while the Germans prepare to open the ark they have recovered, with Belloq presiding in the robes of a Hebrew high priest. All appears lost. But this is nothing if not a Hollywood movie, and a happy ending is in the cards. The Germans expect to harness the power of God to use in their soon-to-be ensuing war machine. But, in the words of the late C.S. Lewis, Aslan is not a tame lion, and God is not a genie, bottled up waiting for the magic lamp to be rubbed releasing him to do the bidder's beckoning.

As fun and as fast as *Raiders of the Lost Ark* is, the whole emphasis is on the power of God locked up somehow in this ancient and mysterious artifact. Certainly in the Bible, the Israelites treated the ark with fear and respect, and it did carry with it a supernatural



power that caused death and disease to be visited upon their enemies (1 Sam. 5-6). But the ark represented the very presence of the holy and living God, and it was His power that was in view. Though the power of God is not available upon request to the owner of the ark, it is a rightful truth that the power of God is something to behold.

The very same power of God that was believed to be locked in the Ark of the Covenant was the power of God that defeated sin, Satan and death at the cross. It is the power of God for the salvation for all who believe (Rom. 1:16). It is the power of God available through the resurrection of Jesus (Phil. 3:10) to his followers who trust and depend on him. We may not dodge rolling boulders or poisoned blow-darts. We may not stare down king cobras or escape cruel Nazis. But as we search for our own personal arks, we can find the power of God available to us for our daily lives. We just need to lay down our bullwhip and our own strength – God's power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:8).

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