

# “Does It Really Matter?!”

## Act 4 (4:1-4)

**Intro.** – In London, England a Gladys Gibbons sued the man who was her driving instructor. She told the High Court that it was Howard Priestly’s fault. She claimed he was negligent and wanted him to pay the damages.

The accident happened on her 19<sup>th</sup> driving lesson. Let me quote the actual transcript of the court’s proceedings. This is what Gladys Gibbons said: “If he (referring to Howard Priestly the driving instructor) had just reached over and hit the brake or switched off the ignition, I might never have hit that tree. But no – all he did was brace himself, close his eyes and shout: ‘Now you’ve done it!’”

What makes this story fascinating is the fact that Gladys Gibbons never got the point. Did it matter this was her 19<sup>th</sup> lesson? Did it matter she was in the driver seat? Did it matter Howard Priestly was fearing for his life? Did any of this really matter?

I use this to introduce a far more pressing matter. Does it really matter whether Jesus rose from the dead? What difference can a matter of ancient history (2,000 plus yrs. ago) have on the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Is it important and relevant to daily life? When it comes to the bodily resurrection of Jesus, does it really matter?

Our text makes clear the resurrection of Jesus effected quite the stir in the early stages of the church. My question is, has the Gospel message changed any since? Isn’t the very hub of Christian hope/promise is in the fact that Jesus is alive? Doesn’t the empty tomb set Christianity apart from any other practice?

**Purpose:** *to show the resurrection of Jesus really does matter*

We will accomplish this purpose by showing how the resurrection answers three baffling questions often asked in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

## I Is There a GOD?

- Illus. – Gandhi on atheism – Mahatma Gandhi was once approached by an atheist with the request to organize and promote an anti-God society. Gandhi replied, “It amazes me to find an intelligent person who fights against something which he does not at all believe exists.”
- certainly it remains “fashionable” to at the very least ignore God, if not deny Him in most circles today

### A. The Bible Always Assumes God

1. You will never find the Bible arguing for God’s existence....
2. Instead, the Bible points to Jesus who reveals to us God!
  - a. this point alone boggles our imaginations – behind this grand creation is a personal, loving Creator who cares/loves us in spite of our open sin and rebellion to Him.
  - b. He chose to come and reveal Himself, to share His creation and make known His will in the only terms we understand – the terms of human life.

### B. What a Human Life

1. The life of Jesus embodied/fleshed out every good thing known to mankind AND in the process of His life here amongst His creation, He was totally sin free...
2. Christ set the highest standards for human conduct; yet, unlike any other being He KEPT those standards without error/sin.

### C. What a Divine Life

1. Jesus makes the following claims: He and Father are one (John 17); the authority to forgive sins (Mark 2:5; Luke 7:48); to be final Judge of all mankind (Matthew 25:31ff, John 5:22); to be God in the flesh (Luke 22:67-70).
  - a. put this in perspective – imagine a modern day religious leader saying the eternal destiny of his hearers depended on their acceptance of his grace and mercy.
  - b. J.R. Stott, “Such a preacher would not long escape the attention of police or psychiatrist!”
2. Jesus accepts worship
  - a. Peter confessed Matthew 16:16 “*You are the Christ...*”

- b. Thomas said in John 20:28 “*My Lord and My God!*”
- c. in both of these instances Jesus readily accepted their worship as His right...
- 3. In Matthew 12:39-41, Jesus makes His position clear:
  - a. no sign be given but “the sign of Jonah”...
  - b. men of Nineveh will appear condemning this generation because Nineveh repented...
  - c. Jesus was true to His word – His bodily resurrection after 3 days in the tomb authenticated everyone of His claims!
- 4. Thus, the most compelling evidence for God’s existence is Christ Jesus:
  - a. by His incarnation, life, death and resurrection, He has shown us God!
  - b. He shows us God is personal, holy and that God forgives at infinite personal cost.
  - c. He shows by the resurrection that evil won’t have the last word – this is His world!

Thus, in the risen Jesus is the answer to “Is There a God?” This is why the resurrection matters!

## II Aren’t All Religions of EQUAL VALUE?

- the fact there are over 340 denominations and dozens of cults/sects is more than troubling.
- what is more concerning is the conclusion that all of these are of equal value and it really doesn’t matter with whom you identify just as long as it’s a church etc.
- the resurrection of Jesus proves otherwise...
- A. Alive Never Again to See Death
  - 1. Christianity asserts that God took human form, died for all mankind’s sin, and rose victorious over death never again to die (Romans 6:9 etc.)
  - 2. His resurrection proves all of Christ’s claims = The Way, Truth and Life...
    - a. resurrection proves His claim of being no one less than Almighty God Himself!
    - b. other *religions* have leaders who have and do make such claims, but they are in the grave or soon headed for it!
- B. Alive to Meet Man’s Greatest Need
  - 1. Nowhere else will one find out about a God who cares enough to pay for your sins, to rise from the dead as a promise for the future and to be willing to meet man’s greatest need = forgiveness!
  - 2. Christianity is not a maker of bigoted and unloving people...
    - a. if Christ is indeed, as resurrection proves (God in the flesh), then to reject or even neglect Him is the ultimate folly.
    - b. this is why Christ is not and never can be just another religious leader... He is not even “the best” = HE IS THE ONLY!
  - 3. In risen Christ, God confronts all with unnerving directness – He offers total Grace; but, demands of us total Allegiance!
  - 4. The key to Christianity is the resurrection:
    - Illus. – Auguste Comte (French philosopher) told Thomas Carlyle, that He Comte intended to found a new religion which would sweep away everything and in particular Christianity. Carlyle’s reply: “Splendid – all you need to do is speak as never man spoke, live as never man lived, be crucified, rise again the third day, and get the world to believe you are still alive. Then your religion may have a chance.”

Thus in answer to the question “Aren’t All Religions of Equal Value?” – no other *religion* has risen Savior

## III What Happens After DEATH?

- Illus. – back in the 60’s a newspaper ran a series of articles in which distinguished writers gave their view of what happens after death. These articles were eventually made into book *The Great Mystery of Life Hereafter*. With Buddhist, Atheist, Spiritualist etc. contributing – conclusion = “No one can know for sure because nobody has experienced death and come back to explain it.”
- I beg to differ – don’t you?

A. Christ is Our Cape of Good Hope

1. Middle ages there were several attempts to sail around the southern tip of Africa in a effort to discover a new route to the East. All attempts to round the Cape where the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans met had failed with tragedy after tragedy. Because of this, this Cape was called *The Cape of Storms*. But a daring mariner named Vasco da Gama blazed the trail. And the Cape that was known as *Cape of Storms* was renamed then and remains to this day *Cape of Good Hope*.
2. The enigma of life after death is like that:
  - a. up to time Christ died/rose again, death was like *The Cape of Storms*... littered with wrecks...
  - b. Christ's resurrection however has turned man's understanding of life after death into *The Cape of Good Hope*. He blazed the trail. He alone can act as our pilot taking us around *The Cape of Death* to *The Cape of Life*!

B. Christ is the Beginning of the New Creation

1. 2 Corinthians 5:17 "*Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*"
2. Christ has opened a door that has been locked since the death of Adam and Eve – He has met, fought and beaten forever the King of Death!
3. Jesus alone is the beginning of the New Creation!

**Conclusion:** The story is told of an exhibition of Rembrandt's paintings. It was closing time and as the custodian moved people out of the gallery, the custodian heard some of the crowd making derogatory remarks about the artist and his works. The custodian quietly remarked, "It isn't the artist, but the viewers who are on trial."

What did he mean by that? The same thing is true of Jesus. We are free to mock, neglect, refuse, dishonor and even deny Him. But remember this, the God who offers you and me our greatest need will one day say, "Time is no more!"

Our God is not one with whom to trifle; thus, it is you and me, not Christ who is on trial. Our Lord's integrity and person have been proven by the resurrection. The question is, what will we do with Him?