

***“When is believing in Jesus just plain foolishness?”***

***Agape Baptist Church, Kitwe Zambia Outreach Sunday 04-12-11***

Q: When is believing in Jesus just plain foolishness? Think about that for a moment.

I think perhaps we could ask when is believing in anything just plain foolishness?

If each of you could write down your answer to this question on a blank sheet of paper and I were to collect them I think we would find almost all of us would have written down the same answer.

I think we would all agree that if what we believe in is not true, or is a lie then our believing in it would then be just plain foolishness. We would actually be the fools then. Why would we be the fools in this case because we believe in something that is not true or that is a lie? We are fools because what we believe in is foolish.

Lets translate this to my original question. When is believing in Jesus just plain foolishness? The answer then would have to be if Jesus was not true or if He was just a lie. In this scenario those who believe in Jesus would be the fools and those who do not would not be the fools.

Are you with me so far? This is simple logic isn't it?

However, now we must consider that there is one more scenario when believing in something is just plain foolish. This one is not as obvious. Here it is. When whatever it is that people believe in ***is true and is not a lie*** but you are one of the ones that do not know it is true. In this case from your vantage point those who believe in whatever it is are just plain foolish. They are the fools and you are not ... but in actuality you are the fool and they are not. In fact to them who believe in what they know to be true you are just plain foolish for not believing in what is true.

Fool for believing in what is NOT true and a fool for NOT believing in what is true!

**HOOK:** The date was 18 November 1978. It began like any other day. Dawn was breaking over the lush tropical forest. Mothers were cuddling their babies as they awaited their morning milk. Children were busy innocently playing. Fathers struggled to roll out of bed to begin the tough work in the fields. Daily routine required working in the fields from 0700 to 1800 with an hour break only for lunch. The almost constant preaching over the loudspeakers by the group's exalted leader filled the dense jungle air. Daily hard work and suffering was thought to be holy and something to be admired. These people were not only committed to hard work but also to their leader and their God.

News spread quickly throughout the day that this night might be the Great White Night that everyone had already prepared for and was waiting for. This night they believed deeply that they would achieve their ultimate spiritual awakening for the glory of their cause. That evening the standard drill began. "Blaam" Blaam as the groups own security guards began running around gathering them to assemble together. Shouts of glee could be heard as they hustled to the meeting area. There their leader awaited them. He stood over 6 feet tall and had an air of compassion and even tenderness for his people. "Today is the day," he announced in a deep booming voice. Everyone knew what he meant and what to do. Families gathered together with glee for the last time joyfully hugging each other. Tears streamed down their faces as they said their prayers for their future.

Then at once everyone rushed to get in the line where the leader was. Everyone was racing to get there first. Once they reached their leader they were greeted with a hug and received a drink that was a special concoction designed to help each one know true peace and meet God and bring glory to their great cause. First the toddlers drank and then one by one they all drank the special drink. Next the families all retreated together and huddled together in anticipation. Then an eerie silence fell over the camp. Within an hour more than 900 people from tiny babies to the elderly were all dead.

This is not a scene from a horror movie or a made up story. This is a true story. People lay in horrifying heaps; piled on top of each other. The ugly scene revealed each family's final moments as they clutched their loved ones and breathed their last breaths. ***There was not an***

**attack, there was no gunfire nobody killed these people. They killed themselves. They were all a part of a super religious group known as The People's Temple.** That evening they all drank Kool Aid laced with Cyanide. Of the dead, 638 were adults and 276 were children. The place was Jonestown, Guyana located in South America. The exalted leader was the Reverend Jim Jones. In spite of tax evasion allegations and other questionable practices, Reverend Jones was still widely respected for setting up a racially mixed church, which helped the disadvantaged.

Over 900 fools lost their lives that day for all of eternity. **They were convinced that they had the truth. To them you and I were the fools. To them a prudent and careful examination of the Scriptures wasn't necessary. Because they did not know the Truth about who God is they were deceived even to the point of death, over 900 lives lost forever in hell eternally separated from God.**

You know there are two principles in life that the sooner we learn them the better off we will be. Unfortunately some never learn them.

1. There are two sides to every story. **Some of you based on things you have heard over the years or something that happened you have decided that the message of the Bible and believing in Jesus is just plain foolishness. Be careful because believing in the wrong "truth" will get you killed.** In the case of believing in Jesus man, because of the effects of sin, is naturally one sided and bent towards not believing in Him. Man must work hard at learning the other side of the story about the Truth of the Bible.
2. Something could be true whether I believe it or not! (PREACH THIS A LITTLE)

Q: What about you? Do you know the truth? Jesus said if you know the truth it will set you free. Are you free today, truly free? Not financially free or being free to just do anything you want. That is not true freedom. **True freedom is knowing that all of your life is pleasing to God and that you are at peace with Him and you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that your sins are forgiven and that you have eternal life?**

So when is believing in Jesus just plain foolishness?

1. If Jesus is not true and is a lie then those who believe in Him are just plain foolish.
2. OR ... If Jesus is true and not a lie then those who don't believe in him although they will think those that do believe are the foolish ones in actuality they are the fools.

So in this room sit foolish people and not foolish people as it relates to believing in Jesus Christ and it all boils down to is Jesus Christ a lie and not true or is He true and not a lie?

***This morning I am going to carefully show you that Jesus Christ is indeed true and is not a lie so then you will not be ignorant of the truth. At that point it will be up to you as to whether you will be a fool or not.***

*Give example of counterfeit money and how Bank Tellers are trained to recognize the counterfeit is by knowing backwards and forwards and every which way what the true money looks like so when a counterfeit Kwacha is passed they will spot it.*

The two objective areas I am going to examine this morning are:

1. Is the Bible reliable?
2. How do we know Jesus is really who He claimed to be?

Then I am going to make a more subjective argument by telling you of God's power in my life for the last 27 years.

Lets get started!

***Is the Bible reliable?*** Have you ever thought of what's at stake if it isn't? Christianity would be a joke. Not just Christianity but many other false religions like Islam would be a joke also. Did you know that? Why would they? Because in the case of Islam in addition to the Quran (their Holy book) they also believe very much in all the books of Moses as

exactly found in the first 8 books of the Bible and the Psalms of David as found in the Bible.

In addition we would be wasting our time here this morning. We would be pitied as some of the biggest fools ever known for even being here.

Conversely, have you ever thought about what is at stake if it is reliable and you are not relying on it? You then become the fool because of the Bible's message.

If you think about it there is primarily only one way of authenticating any ancient piece of literature since no one is alive who knew the authors or even saw the original book of any ancient piece of literature. In fact these books are so old it's been hundreds and even thousands of years since anyone could have any real knowledge of these pieces of literature. How can we then know that any piece of ancient literature including the Bible is accurate and was really written by whoever claimed to write it?

It is to find as many manuscript copies as you can and compare them for their accuracy. The higher number you find the more authentic the book is and equally important in addition to the number is the number of years between the first copy and the rest of the manuscripts. The closer in years they are the more authentic and reliable the book is.

Have you ever thought about how casually we just accept some ancient documents as history? When you compare their authenticity to the Bible's authenticity they don't compare at all. For Example. Maybe the two most famous pieces of Ancient literature would be Homer's Iliad and then Plato's works. There are *643 manuscript copies* of the Iliad in the world all within about *400 years of each other*. For Plato there are *7 manuscript copies within 1300 years of each other*. For ***the New Testament alone there are 5,366 manuscript copies in the world and they are within 50 to 225 years apart!*** This is of huge significance. The books we should be questioning are books like Homer, Plato and even Caesar and not the Bible. Given the large quantity of manuscript copies what is also astounding is we find overwhelming agreement and consistency in all the manuscripts adding further to the reliability of the Bible.

Probably the single greatest archeological discovery ever made was made by a Bedouin shepherd boy in 1947 in the caves at Qumran near the Sea of Galilee. There was found about 800 scrolls that were written from **250BC to 65AD**. Every book of the OT was found except the book of Esther. The scrolls had been buried deep in caves when the Romans were advancing to crush the Jewish revolt that started in 66AD. They remained untouched and well preserved for 1900 years! I wonder how that could have happened? **The Dead Sea scrolls completely confirm the accuracy of the other thousands of manuscripts that we possess.** For example, a scroll of the Biblical book Isaiah written in 150 BC. Found in nearly perfect condition was compared to a Masoretic text dated in 916AD. *After 1,000 years of the 166 words in the 53<sup>rd</sup> Chapter of Isaiah only 17 letters showed any possible signs of change.* The accuracy in which the manuscripts were written down is truly unfathomable. Ravi Zacharias said, "There is nothing in ancient manuscript evidence to match such textual availability and integrity."

Another measurement of the Bible's authenticity when compared to all other ancient pieces of literature is its uniqueness.

Doctor Montiero Williams, a professor of Sanskrit, spent 40 years studying Eastern books said: ***"Pile all the Eastern books ever written if you will, on the left side of your study table, but place your own Holy Bible on the right side, all by itself and with a wide gap between them, for there is a gulf between it (the Bible) and the so called sacred books of the East that severs the one from the other utterly, hopelessly, and forever."***

Consider this about the book of the Bible:

1. Written over a 1500 year span
2. By more than 40 different authors from all walks of life including kings, military leaders, peasants, philosophers, fisherman, tax collectors, poets, musicians, statesman, scholars, Sheppard's and a doctor.
3. Written in very different places like the wilderness, dungeon, palace, and prison in exile.
4. Written on three different continents: Asia, Africa and Europe
5. Written in three different languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek

6. Various styles: poetry, historical narrative, song, romance, biography, law, prophecy ...
7. In all its diversity it contains no errors whatsoever, presents a single unfolding consistent and unified story of God's redeeming love for those He created.
8. Finally and most important among of all the people described in the Bible, the leading character throughout is the one, true, living God made known through Jesus Christ.

The Bible has been read more people, published in more languages, studied, and criticized more than any other book ever written. The Bible was the first book ever to come of the Gutenberg press in 1456. It is not unusual to hear about books that have hit the bestseller list by selling a few hundred thousands copies. It is much rarer to come across books that have sold more than a million copies, and extremely rare to find books that have sold past the ten million mark. It staggers the mind to realize that the Bible has sold into the Billions of copies. Billions! Equally staggering is the number of translations into different languages there are for the Bible. Most books are not translated into another tongue but of those that are it is rare to find a book translated into more than three languages. The Bible has been translated into more than 2200 languages.

Lastly the Bible just makes sense. Take for example the sacred writings of the Hindus. You find nonsense like: The moon is 50,000 leagues higher than the sun and shines by its own light. Night is caused by the sun setting behind a huge mountain several thousand feet high and located in the center of the earth. Read the Koran and you find that the stars are nothing but torches in the lower heavens, and that men are made out of baked clay. There is not one such absurdity in the Bible.

The Bible is completely and comprehensibly reliable!

### **How do we know Jesus is really who He claimed to be?**

As you know Jesus claimed to be the Messiah sent by God as God to save and deliver man. Whenever the followers of Jesus, the disciples were proving Jesus Messiahship they always referred to two things. One His resurrection and two all of the fulfilled Messianic Prophecies that Jesus

fulfilled. As followers we should appeal to the same. This morning I want to focus now on the OT Prophecies that were given.

These Prophecies were given over a 1,000-year period to clearly proclaim exact details and information by God so that when the Messiah came to earth the world would know. God went to extraordinary efforts to make sure that when the Messiah came it would be unmistakable.

There are ***over 300 Messianic Prophecies given in the OT and not one of them failed to happen and not one of them failed to happen exactly as Prophesied.*** Now in just a minute I am going to share with you the statistical, mathematical odds of this happening. It is mind blowing for sure. But before you see the overwhelming evidence that proves Jesus is the Messiah I want to show you just a few of the 300 Prophecies and the detail in which they were given.

First, are the events **just before the crucifixion and second is the crucifixion itself.** Before the crucifixion:

- a. READ Prophecy in *Psalm 41:9* - Betrayed ***by a friend who was eating bread***
- b. *Zechariah 11:11-13* - Betrayed for ***30 pieces of silver*** that will be ***thrown on the Temple floor and given to a potter***

Now here is the account of how it actually happened ***some 500 to 1500 years later after the Prophecies was given.***

- a. Read John 13: 21-28 says: “
- b. Read Mathew 26:14-16 says “ and Mathew 27:5 says” and Mathew 27: 6-10 says: “

PREACH SOME HERE ABOUT THE SPECIFIC DETAILS AND ACCURACY IF JUST ONE OF THE SMALLEST OF THESE PROPHETIC DETAILS DID NOT TAKE PLACE EXACTLY ALL OF THEM WOULD BE UNRELIABLE AND SO WOULD JESUS AND HIS CLAIMS!!

Now lets **turn our attention to the crucifixion.** There are three clear and unmistakable OT Prophecies about the crucifixion of Jesus.

- a. Psalm 22:16 written in 1000 BC says:
- b. Isaiah 53: 5 written about 850 BC says:
- c. Zechariah 12:10-11 written about 500BC says:



Do you want to know what is most astonishing about these Prophecies besides their exact fulfillment?

***Crucifixion was not even invented by the Romans until 400BC!*** Isn't it amazing that there were three prophecies that the Messiah would be "pierced through" crucified hundreds of years before that method of execution was ever devised?

As I mentioned there are over 300 hundred of these OT Messianic Prophecies that all came true in one man. Modern mathematics and science of probability has proven the precision by which we know Jesus Christ is truly the Messiah by focusing in not on 300 prophecies but on only 8. They picked 8 Prophecies that they said were totally beyond the control of Jesus. In other words if He knew about some of them He could have tried to make some of them come true. Crazy I know but for the sake of math and science listen to this. Here are the 8:

1. Place of birth
2. Time of birth
3. Manner of birth
4. Betrayal
5. Manner of death
6. People's reactions
7. Piercing of His side by the soldiers
8. Burial

Math and Science have shown that the probabilities of just these 8 Prophecies coming true and fulfilling all 8 in one person is 1 in 10 to the 17<sup>th</sup> power or 10 to the 17<sup>th</sup> power (10 with 17 zero's after it)

Illustration: This illustration was done using the dimensions of the State of Texas. As you may know the dimensions of Texas and Zambia are almost exact so I will use Zambia in the illustration.

1. Take 10 to 17<sup>th</sup> power silver dollars
2. Lay them on the face of Zambia
3. They will cover all of Zambia 2 feet or .61 meters deep
4. Now mark one of them a different color and stir them all up across the entire Country

5. Now blindfold a man and tell him he can travel as far as he wants to in the country but he must pick up only one silver dollar!

***The chances of this man picking up the one silver dollar marked a different color is the same odds as Jesus fulfilling just 8 of the Prophecies and yet all 300 were fulfilled in Jesus.***

He fulfilled all of them 100% of them with complete accuracy!!

Nothing proves that Jesus is who He claimed to be like this!! He is who He claimed to be. He is the Messiah. He is the Son of God. He is God!

Not only is the Bible completely true and reliable Jesus is true and not a lie.

The question now becomes what are you going to do with this Truth? Do you believe the Truth are you relying on it?

**Lastly, I want to make a more subjective argument from my life** that the Bible is reliable and that Jesus is who He claimed to be by sharing with you about my life the last 27 years.

Although from your perspective this may appear subjective I can tell you from my perspective it is as objective as the reliability of the Bible and the facts, which prove Jesus is who He said He was.

You have heard the saying: you cannot always judge a book by its cover? My life is not as it may appear to you. It would be natural for you to look at me and think as a white guy growing up in America that I grew up in at least a good family, in a stable home and financial set up and since America is a Christian Nation I probably grew up knowing God.

The reality about my life is those things could not be further from the truth as far as my life growing up ...

DAVE:

1. Result of me trusting Jesus: ***“feeling of being near to God now never left” “I no longer on the outside looking in” the JOY that those same people had I had! AND Abundant life and True Freedom = doing what I know is right!***
2. Clear Gospel message with strong INVITATION to repent (***You will live a life of misery and then go to hell without Jesus Christ***) and take SELF OF THRONE and put JESUS ON THRONE OF LIFE
3. Some of you:
  - Living immoral lifestyles
  - Tired of not knowing if you will get to heaven for sure or not
  - Coming to this Church or been in a Church much of your life but you have just been religious but you have never repented and given Jesus total control of your life
  - Believed a lot of foolish liberal ideas and embraced them without examining them because deep down you want them to be true because if they are then the Bible can't be true and you then don't have to believe in Christ
  - Quit fighting this TODAY is your day to come to Jesus
  - ***You know who you are, if your heart is beating fast or if you are wondering if I am talking to you then I am talking to you***
4. Come forward during closing song and embrace the truth!