

Acts 12: Don't Drink the Kool-Aid

He said, "If you see me as your friend, I'll be your friend. As you see me as your father, I'll be your father." He said, "If you see me as your God, I'll be your God." These are the words of former Peoples Temple Member, Hue Fortson Jr., regarding the American cult leader, Jim Jones.

November 18, 1978

"On November 18th, 1978, in Jonestown, Guyana, 909 members of Peoples Temple died in what has been called the largest mass suicide in modern history." Immediately upon reading this chilling text at the beginning of the PBS Documentary "Jonestown," I remembered the words of **Romans 5:7** *Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good.* I believe the deeper question we're faced with today can be summed up by the infamous 1995 Eagles running back, Ricky Watters, "For who? For what?"

What would lead 909 people, 304 of them children, to simultaneously drink cyanide laced grape Kool-Aid, other than being led by a leader who made promises they could never keep.

Jonestown members believed their leader was not only the voice of God, but that he was the reincarnation of Mahatma Gandhi, Father Divine, Jesus, Gautama Buddha and Vladimir Lenin, just to name a few. Now, we may be smarter than to follow a cult leader to Brazil and live in a commune to escape American capitalism, but there are still things in our life that distract us from hearing the voice of the One True, Holy, and Living God.

The Voice of a god (little "g")

After being granted an appointment, the people of Tyre and Sidon came eagerly to hear from King Herod Agrippa:

Acts 12:21-22 (NLT) *...When the day arrived, Herod put on his royal robes, sat on his throne, and made a speech to them. ²² The people gave him a great ovation, shouting, "It's the voice of a god, not of a man!"*

You could argue that there was a whole lot of Kool-aid drinking going on, but this declaration of the people is no different than the declaration we place on politicians, actors, musicians, and athletes. In our society we have many people who figuratively sit on thrones, dressed in royal robes, deceiving us to believe that they are "gods" (little "g"). If you don't think this is true, consider how many celebrities have broken the law and have never been punished. All because of their power and influence in this world.

This isn't just something we face but being persuaded by people who claimed to be something they're not was becoming more prevalent during this time of history. We'll even see Paul tackling the false prophet Bar-Jesus in tomorrow's reading in Acts

13 ¹⁰ Then he (Paul) said, "You son of the devil, full of every sort of deceit and fraud, and enemy of all that is good! Will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord?"

If we're not careful, we too can be deceived to believe a perversion of *the true ways of the Lord*. Folks don't accept the Diet Coke of the Gospel when you can have the real thing!

909 people died for Jim Jones, but Jim Jones never died for them. We've already read Romans 5:7, but think about this last thought in light of **Romans 5:8** *But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*

The next time we're swayed to believe that someone other than God is God's voice, lets hold them up to the test of this question... Did they die for me? The answer to that, other than Jesus, is always no!

Be careful, there's lots of grape Kool-Aid floating around the world today, and you truly don't know what's in it.