

Christianity...200 Proof

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. Slide2,3,4 VBS. Blank. Ladies Summer Series.
- B. Slide5 Thrive: Pastor Mike/*What is Prayer?* Agape rm. [Message from pastor Nate is online]
- C. Slide6,7 Tues Nite Men's Fellowship - 7 pm in the high school room. *It's an opportunity to build relationships centered on Christ with other men from our church.* We will be studying the life and ministry of Christ and learning how to apply the teachings of Jesus to our everyday lives. Come receive encouragement from the Word of God and from other men as we learn what it means to be a follower of Christ and to join in His mission.

II. Slide8a-c Intro:

- A. What does **Proof** mean when it refers to **Whiskey**? (& other distilled alcoholic beverages)
- B. In the very old days, whiskey was **proved** to be good whiskey (that is it had enough alcohol in it, and had not been watered down), by pouring some whiskey on a pellet of **gunpowder**. Touch a match to the powder, and if it ignited it was **proof** that it was good whiskey. However, if there was **too much water** in the whiskey, the powder would be **too wet** to ignite. Then you have **proof** that it's **not** good whiskey.
 - 1. About **50% alcohol-water mixtures** will allow **gunpowder** to catch on fire.
 - a) Thus the **50%** alcohol became **100% proof** that it was good whiskey, which is why today it is called **100 proof whiskey**. [no, I'm not advocating drinking. *illust*]
- C. Slide9 **Proof** - *A test or trial of something to establish whether it is true.*
 - 1. We all desire **proof**. *We need to know if it's true.* And that's a good thing.
 - 2. Asking God for proofs doesn't **shake Him up** at all. **BUT...you must allow Him to answer different then you might expect.**
- D. Ever been shook to the very foundation of your faith?
 - 1. Maybe it was a **difficult question?** About God, or His Word.
 - 2. Maybe it was a very **difficult life circumstance?** - A **death** of a loved one, a **bankruptcy**, a **boyfriend** that broke up with you, a **spouse** that left you, a **child** that walked away from the faith.

- E. Ever experience: *doubt, despair, questions, hesitation, uncertainty, reservation, indecision, vacillation...* **than** you're in good company Christian.
1. John the Baptist having doubts is *real, authentic, genuine Christianity...* **or Christianity 200 Proof.** *corn ethanol*
- F. **Slide10 Title: Christianity 200 Proof.** Outline: *Proof. More Proof. Double Proof. Final Proof*

III. Slide11 **PROOF (1-6)**

- A. **PERPLEXED, The Prophets Pause** (1-3)
1. An outdoorsman, a child of the desert & of the wide-open spaces, **now** confined in a dungeon cell in the castle of *Machaerus*.
 - a) John would find it very easy to get discouraged.
 - b) **Slide12 Machaerus/Μαχαροῦς** (a sword) is a *fortified hilltop palace* located in Jordan, 15 miles S/E of the mouth of the Jordan River, on the eastern side of the Dead Sea.
 - (1) **We today get discouraged in much better circumstances.**
- B. John couldn't understand Jesus ministry...**so** he wondered if *another* was to come.
1. *I thought he was coming to Judge...not Save.*
 - a) Was he impatient with Christ's quiet methods?
- C. But John does *the most excellent thing* anyone could do...he sent his little delegation **straight to Jesus** for answers.
1. **Slide13a Doubts** if *hidden*, will fester. **Doubts** if *shared* with others may spread **Doubts** should always be brought directly to Jesus.
 2. Griffith Thomas, *God is not wounded by a reverent challenge.*
 - a) Ps.42:9 (sons of Korah) *I will say to God my Rock, "Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"*
- D. **Slide13b PROOF** (4-6)
- E. (4) 1st Jesus made the dynamic duo *wait & watch* (Lk.7:21).
- F. (5) William Barclay said, John probably expected to hear, "**My armies** are massing. **Caesarea**, the headquarters of the Roman government, is about to fall. **The sinners** are being obliterated. And judgment has begun." He would have expected Jesus to say, "**The wrath** of God is on the march." **but Jesus said, "The mercy** of God is here." Let us

remember that where pain is soothed and sorrow turned to joy, where suffering and death are vanquished, there is the kingdom of God. Jesus' answer was, "Go back and tell John that **the love of God is here.**" [William Barclay, The Gospel of Luke, Ch.7]

1. By Jesus' answer in vs.5, we see that *John doubted His work not necessarily Him.*
- G. John, did you overlook the scriptures that spoke of My *healing, delivering, & preaching in the OT?* [vs.5 conflates/fuses together Isa 35:5,6 & 61:1,2]
1. Is.35:5,6 **And when he comes, he will open the eyes of the blind and unplug the ears of the deaf. The lame will leap like a deer, and those who cannot speak will sing for joy.**
 2. Is.61:1 **The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor.**
 3. Actually he gives them **6 works** that fulfilled OT Messianic promises.
- H. *Slide14a* Does **Jesus** ever look different to **you?** (i.e. *the way He is working in your life?*)
- I. Jesus said, *the proof is in the healing. The proof is in the delivering. The proof is in the raising. The proof is in the preaching.*
1. Blind eyes are seeing things they've never seen before; Cripples are leaping; Lepers once shut out of society now cleansed & restored to fellowship; Ears that have heard no song of a bird, or music, are listening; the dead are raised; Oh, & the spiritually poor who had no soul wealth have heard the Good News & are now rich towards God¹
 2. **Go & tell John...**I Am Master *here* (over all diseases)...I Am *there* (even in death).
I Am *Messiah*...I Am *the Coming One*.
- J. (6) **Offended/stumbling** - His messianic activity did not include *expulsion* of the Romans or *restoration* of the temple religion.
- K. *Slide14b* The Lord's ways can often be very *stumbling*...
1. **David** was offended by God's *severity* (2 Sam.6:8)
 - a) **And David** became angry because of the Lord's outbreak against Uzzah.
 2. **Jonah** was offended by God's *mercy* (Jonah 4:1-3)
 - a) **But it displeased Jonah** exceedingly, and he became angry.

¹ G.Campbell Morgan, Luke, pg.97,98.

3. **Martha** was offended by Christ's *delay* (John 11:21)
- a) Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.
- L. Much **grace** is needed when John's messengers come back to him saying: *Yes, it's Him... the One who can do anything...the One who has all power...buuuut, He didn't say a word about letting you out of prison.*
1. No explanation. Faith nourished. Prison doors left closed. **And then** the message, *blessed is he who is not stumbled because of Me...that's all.*
 2. Christ will not explain Himself, **but instead He will reveal** Himself, *as He did to David, to Jonah, to Martha, & here to John.*
- M. **Slide14c** What have you expected of the Christian faith that turned out to be different?
1. Maybe you've learned: **That** as Jesus didn't come to **judge**, **so** we aren't supposed to judge. **That** as Jesus didn't come to **build religious walls**, **so** we aren't supposed to construct them either. **That** as Jesus came *to reach out to people, to heal, to save, to bring hope, to care...so* ought we.
- N. Our work of the Church is to alleviate human suffering as Christ did, **but that is not our final** work, nor our *principle* work.
1. We are to bring men into living relationship w/God so they might enjoy, as G.Cambell Morgan called it, *"the franchise of eternity"*.

IV. **Slide15 MORE PROOF (7-15)**

- A. Jesus gives honor to His *rugged, faithful, & fearless forerunner*.
1. Such a great tribute to a man...*who had doubts.* :)
- B. **Slide16a** (7) **What did you go out to see?** A fickle, vacillating, swaying character of a man?
1. **Not John.** He was a man *immovable as a mighty tree*.
 - a) He wasn't an *unstable Reed*, more like **a sturdy oak**.
- C. **Slide16b** (8) **What did you go out to see?** Some soft effeminate soul, like the silk-clad attendees of the Royal Palace?
1. **Not John.** That *locust eatin, camel-hair wearin, manly man*.
- D. **Slide17a-c** (9-11) **What did you go out to see?** A Prophet?
1. **Bingo!** And more than a prophet...matter of fact *the greatest prophet*.

- E. (10) Jesus said **John** was the one the OT prophet **Malachi** wrote about.
1. Alfred Plummer said about John, *“The whole man was a sermon.”*
- F. (11b) **But he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he – How?**
- G. **The humblest believer today** has *a much higher position in Christ than* John had as a prophet. [John marked a dividing line in history]
1. **John** belonged to *the old dispensation of Law*. **Believers today** are *seated w/ Christ in the heavenlies*.
 2. **Slide18a/b So**, the **smallest diamond** is stronger than the **largest flint**.
 3. *“Jesus had come; eternity had invaded time; heaven had invaded earth; God had arrived in Jesus; life could never be the same again.”*²
- H. (12) **until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force - The kingdom and its workers** suffer at the hands of violent people who try to prevent or usurp God’s rule.
- I. (14) The spirit of/characteristic of Elijah, **not** the *person* of.

V. **Slide19 DOUBLE PROOF (16-19a)**

A. **THE UNREASONABLENESS OF THE GENERATION**

B. We *also* live in a very *unreasonable* generation.

1. One asked, **What is the biggest problem in our nation...Ignorance or Apathy?**
To which came the response, *I don’t know & I don’t care*.

C. **Here is a searching & scathing rebuke**. Christ likened their generation unto little children who wouldn’t play anything.

1. **Slide20** I remember playing with my 2 younger sisters growing up, **Gas Station**.
 - a) [photo me/Net] One would pull up on our *red peddle tractor*, the other would use the garden hose to pump pretend gas in.
2. **Slide21,22 Rose Barnes/Cannon** told me **Milla**, her adopted daughter from **Uganda**, plays church w/her dolls & toys. She asked which one was **pastor Brian**, *it was her blue donkey*.
3. **But** we all had a friend on the block that *didn’t* seem to want to *play anything*.

² The Gospel of Luke. 2000, William Barclay, The Daily Study Bible Series.

- a) **Wanna ride bikes?** Too much energy. **How about Monopoly?** Too long.
- D. They complained about **both John's Asceticism**(self-discipline) **& Christ's gentleness**.
1. **John** stayed in the desert as the eccentric; **so** they assumed **a demon** took his **wits away** (18).
 2. **Jesus** came living the life of men & entering their activities; **so** they taunted Him with *loving earth's pleasures far too much*.
 3. **John's** too rough, look at his clothes, what a fanatic.
 4. **Jesus**, *He's too smooth. I've seen him at some parties you know. Did you hear, He hangs out with sinners?*
 5. So they didn't like **serious John nor sociable Jesus**.
 - a) **Yet**, despite their differences, **their message was the same**.
- E. God has made many appeals to mankind in history's past. All sorts of different *Patriarchs, Prophets, Kings, Priests, Apostles, & Messengers* have come, **& yet** were met with **willful & childish discontent**.
1. (msg) **John came fasting and they called him crazy. I came feasting and they called me a lush, a friend of the riffraff. Opinion polls don't count for much, do they? The proof of the pudding is in the eating.**

VI. Slide23 FINAL PROOF (19b)

- A. *The proof is in the pudding* (or as the 14th cent proverb said, *The proof of the pudding is in the eating*)
1. **Pudding** actually meant: a portion of pig intestine, tied with a pudding stick at both ends, stuffed with all sorts of **meat, fat, grain, & spices**. aka **sausage**.
 - a) You can't say whether it is good or not **until** you partake of it. (same w/Christianity)
 2. One really can't **try on** Christianity. He says instead, **eat my body & drink my blood** to make His point. **The results vindicate the method**.
- B. **Do you get it? Christian, you & I are the proof**. We are to be *God's Final Answer*.
- C. Slide24 The renowned artist **Gustave Dore** (1821–1883) lost his passport while traveling in Europe. When he came to a border crossing, he explained his predicament to one of the guards. Giving his name to the official, Dore hoped he would be recognized and allowed to pass. **The guard**, however, said that many people attempted to cross the border by

claiming to be persons they were not. **Dore** insisted that he was the man he claimed to be. *“All right,”* said the official, *“we’ll give you a test, and if you pass it we’ll allow you to go through.”* Handing him a pencil and a sheet of paper, he told the artist to sketch several peasants standing nearby. **Dore** did it so quickly and skillfully that the guard was convinced he was indeed who he claimed to be. **His work confirmed his word.**

1. And so did **Jesus’ works** confirm Him. **How about yours?**