

Lightning bolt kills 4 apostolic sect members [Zimbabwe]

Friday, 17 January 2014 09:04



Liberty Dube Post Correspondent

A LIGHTNING bolt struck four members of the Johane Masowe Apostolic Church



in Nyagato Village in Nyanga last Friday and villagers have described it as pure act of "black magic". The quartet — Judith Chibanda (27), Karen Gwengo (30), Mirriam Nyagato (28) and Viola Nyahowa (38) — were struck while seeking shelter from heavy rains under a baobab tree.

They died a few minutes before being taken to the hospital at around 3pm. They were buried last Saturday in Nyagato Village.

When The Manica Post visited the late Judith Chibanda's homestead, her relatives were grappling to accept the tragedy that befell them.

Judith's uncle, Mr Daniel Tsabasvi (38), said the lightning bolt unusually split into two parts and struck from both sides of a baobab tree trunk killing all the four people who were seated on the tree's roots.

"From our tradition, a person cannot be struck by lightning while hiding under a baobab tree. That is unheard of. Secondly, the lightning travelled from the top branches to the trunk before it split into two, followed where the deceased were seated and struck them. The rains were heavy for less than five minutes and strangely enough that is when they were struck. Other people, mostly men, had gone away. I am pretty sure that this is the work of our enemies. Hazvisi zvega. We are still mourning and we have to accept the fate," said an emotionally charged Tsabasvi.

Chibanda left behind two children, Silence (7) and Devine (2). Another worshipper, Serenia Munemo, sustained injuries after she was also struck by the lightning bolt. She is reportedly in a stable condition. The bolt left behind a bold white trail which started from the top branch down to the roots. It burnt the leaves from the left side of the tree and roots. The Nyagato family that lost one of their own, Mirriam, refused to accommodate the news crew and said they were still mourning and were not comfortable sharing their sentiments and emotions with anyone else.

Another villager and relative to one of the deceased, who requested anonymity, said the lightning was "man-made" and had targeted some people. "We are still mourning, yes, but the truth should be told. This was a targeted thing and we suspect foul play. The rains only fell for a few minutes, only to hear that four people were struck. We can't point a finger at anyone, but this is very unusual. Zvine chivanhu," he said.

"The lightning was so strange. We are all shocked as a village. Lightning can never leave a trail and we suspect that it is one of the witchcraft acts," he said. Manicaland provincial police spokesperson Inspector Enock Chishiri urged people to desist from seeking shelter under a tree when it is raining.

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