



## **Christian or Cult?**

### **Aims**

1. To instill a confidence in the teens that Christianity is the one true faith.
2. To help them understand that not all “religions” or flavours of Christianity lead to God.

### **What is a religion?**

*A complex of beliefs and practices which point to a set of values and an understanding of the meaning of existence.* – High Court of Australia

*A particular system of faith and worship* – Oxford Dictionary

### **So what makes a cult different from mainstream religions?**

A cult is defined as:

*A relatively small group of people having religious beliefs or practices regarded by others as strange or as imposing excessive control over members* – Oxford Dictionary

However, it doesn't necessarily have to be a “small group of people”....

*On Nov. 18, 1978, in Jonestown, Guyana, more than 900 members of the Peoples Temple cult, led by Rev. Jim Jones, an American, committed suicide by drinking poisoned punch. The mass suicide immediately followed the murder of Rep. Leo J. Ryan (D-Calif.), who was visiting Guyana to investigate Jonestown and was ambushed along with several others at the Port Kaituma airstrip. Source: Associated Press, Aug. 7, 1985*

Why do I need to know the difference?

- **False prophets will abound;**

*But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.* 2 Pet. 2:1-3

- **To have a correct understanding of my faith;**

*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* 2 Tim. 2:15

- **To be able to give a reason for my faith;**

*“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.”* 1 Pet. 3:15–16

- **To be able to preach the word;**

*“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”* 2 Tim. 4:2



It's not like we aren't to have expected it. Jesus talked about it. The disciples asked questions about it. It's there in the Word for us to read, to study.

*Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"*

*And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." Matt. 24:3-8*

We're certainly seeing this in our day and age. Jesus said in the last days, these things are going to take place. St Paul warned us;

*Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. 1 Tim. 4:1*

Not only are we told that in the last days people are going to go after the false prophets, but many are going to follow after the doctrine of demons and deceitful spirits.

We are literally seeing an explosion of the world of the occult. In fact, a recent magazine article estimated nearly fifty million Americans are involved in some form of the occult. A recent survey estimated that nearly forty million Americans read their horoscopes, every day, to see what their zodiac sign says they should do that day.

People are involved in the use of tarot cards, palmistry, and numerology. People are going to psychics, to mediums. One of the biggest programs on television is the psychic solution, with Dianne Warwick and other stars promoting psychics and astrology, spiritism, the mediums, the clairvoyants, and playing with the ouija board. People are getting involved in Witchcraft, Satanism and the whole world of the occult.

### **What's the Difference?**

In order to answer this question, we must first have a clear understanding of our faith and who God is...

- **There is only one true God;**

*"You are My witnesses," says the LORD, "And My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the LORD, and besides Me there is no savior." Is. 43:10-11*

- **God is Spirit who fills the heaven and the earth;**

*"Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?" says the LORD; "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" says the LORD. Jer. 23:24*

*"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4:24*



○ **God is not man;**

*"I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, The Holy One in your midst; And I will not come with terror." Hos. 11:9*

○ **Our Lord Jesus Christ is Almighty God incarnate in the flesh;**

*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory. 1 Tim. 3:16*

○ **Our Lord Jesus Christ pre-existed in heaven;**

*And He said to them, "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world." John 8:23*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was with God in the beginning. John 1:1*

○ **We become children of God through adoption;**

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, Romans 8:14-16*

○ **The gospel by which we are saved is that our Lord Jesus Christ provided forgiveness of sins, resurrection and eternal life through His finished work;**

*Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 15:1-4*

○ **We are saved by grace through faith unto good works as God's workmanship;**

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Eph. 2:8-10*

○ **God makes us new creatures as the Author and Finisher of our faith;**

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Cor. 5:17-21*

○ **God's Character;**

- **God is Spirit**
- **God is Living**
- **God is Self-existent** (existed eternally with no beginning and no end)
- **God is Immutable** (unchangeable)



- **God is Omnipotent** (all-powerful)
- **God is Omnipresent** (He is everywhere)
- **God is Omniscient** (all-knowing)
- **God is Transcendent** (not limited by our three dimensional world or by time)
- **God is Sovereign** (having supreme authority)
- **God is Holy** (absolute purity, perfection & majesty)
- **God is Love**
- **God is Truth**

### **Brief overview of the cults**

There are actually four categories of Cults prevalent today. These are:

- 1. Pseudo-Christian Cults**
- 2. Oriental Cults**
- 3. New Age Cults**
- 4. Spiritist Cults or the Occult**

#### **Pseudo-Christian Cults**

Over the last 150 years, the classical definition of a Cult has referred to this first category known as the Pseudo-Christian Cults. These are religious organisations or movements who claim to be Christian and claim to believe in the Bible. But, instead of building their theology and teaching on God's Word, the Bible, they claim some "new revelation" or man-made teaching as superior to the Bible. By interpreting the Bible through the grid of their particular revelation or teaching, these groups end up denying the central doctrines of historic, orthodox, Biblical Christianity. The key perversions of the Cults always relate to the central issues of theology, specifically the Doctrine of God, Jesus Christ, and Salvation.

They are considered Cults because they seek to "counterfeit" Biblical Christianity. Counterfeits deceive by their outward appearance. Like counterfeit money, the Cults want to look and sound like the genuine thing without having their "bogus" nature detected. This is precisely what deceives so many people when confronted by one of the above groups. The Cults will use Christian "terminology" to sound Christian, but then will redefine the terms to fit their own "man-made" theology. The definition of terms is the key to understanding the Cult deception.

The Pseudo-Christian Cults have essentially emptied Biblical Christianity of all of its content theologically, Christ's divinity, His saving grace; and replaced the content with a perverted theology of their own making; then sprayed it over with Christian words and terminology to look and sound Christian; and now market it as a new revelation from God. Many people naively buy the outer wrapping, without first examining the content and essence of the package. This can be deadly to your spiritual health and ultimate eternal destiny!

Such organisations are the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, known as the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, known as the Mormons.

There are other groups, such as the Unification Church, Christian Science, The Way, International and many other organisations which all claim to be Christian and claim to believe the Bible, but instead of building their teaching from what God has revealed, these organisations are claiming some new revelation, some man made teaching which they say supersedes or is greater than the Bible.



They interpret the Bible through their manmade revelations or teaching, and end up denying the basic doctrines and central beliefs of historic Biblical Christianity. They use the term "Jesus Christ" and then redefine the term to fit their man-made theology. Go down to a Christian Science Reading Room, founded by Mary Baker Eddy, and ask them, "Do you believe in the Trinity?"

They will say, "Of course we do!" But if you ask them, "What is the Trinity?" they will tell you the Trinity is three ethical principles: life, truth and love. You see, they will use Christian words to make you think they are Christian, and then they will redefine those words to their man-made theology.

You can ask a Mormon missionary, "Do you believe in Jesus Christ?" he will say, "Of course. We are wearing a little name tag here that says that we are the Church of Jesus Christ." But if you ask that Mormon who is Jesus Christ, you will learn that they believe that Jesus Christ is the brother of Lucifer, that he is simply one God in a pantheon of Gods. Mormons are polytheists. They believe in millions of Gods and not just one of them. They deny the Virgin Birth and teach he was born through physical sex between God and Mary.

That's the story with each of the cults. Their Jesus only looks like the real Jesus on the surface. Dig a little and another one of those false christs rises up. In dealing with the cults, you must define your terminology. What do you mean when you talk about God? What do you mean when you talk about Jesus Christ? What do you mean when you talk about salvation?

### **Oriental Cults**

A second category that we now talk about are what are known as the Oriental cults. These are the cults that have their basis in Oriental or Eastern philosophy, specifically Hinduism and Buddhism.

Such things as the Hare Krishna movement, Christian consciousness, The Divine Light Mission, Transcendental meditation, Yoga, Zen, and many others. It is interesting that while all the American cults are going to Asia, the Asian cults are all coming to America.

All the oriental cults basically teach a Hindu pantheism, that we are all part of an impersonal universe which they call God. They say people suffer in life because they think they are personal beings.

In Hinduism and Buddhism they say personal thinking and feeling is all an illusion. They teach that the world is an illusion, and in order to get rid of suffering we must get rid of the physical personal world which is not real. And we must transcend through transcendental meditation or yoga meditation to become part of the impersonal universe which they call God.

We need understand something here. An "impersonal universe" never loved or cared about you. Only a personal Creator loves and cares for His creation. The world, at large, is lost to that simple theology. They want the answer to be within their control, their understanding, within themselves and the false gods they play with like it that way. That brings us to the third category.

### **The New Age Cults**

The New Age cults are sometime referred to as the Human Potential Movement. They combine Eastern philosophy with Western humanism and psychology teaching that man has evolved physically as an animal in the first stage of life. And they say we are standing on the brink of a New Age, what they call the Age of Aquarius, and in this New Age, man will continue his evolution spiritually to achieve his own divine nature.



A good example of this grouping is the Church of Scientology. We have all seen the ads for the book "Dianetics, The Science of the Mind," by L. Ron Hubbard. Over thirteen million copies have been sold. It is amazing. L Ron Hubbard was a science fiction writer back in the 30s and 40s. In 1954, he started his own church based his science fiction book.

Scientology teaches that the reason why we suffer in life is because you have lost your Godhood through thousands of reincarnations. For a mere ten or twenty thousand dollars, they will help program a person through past reincarnations to get back to the state of Godhood.

Then when you realize that you are God, you are able to worship yourself and you will be at peace. How much does it cost to reach that divine plateau?

This is the oldest lie recorded in the Bible. In the Garden of Eden, the serpent said to Adam and Eve, "Ah, eat of the fruit. You can become God yourselves." Isn't it interesting that Satan hasn't changed? He's still promoting that same old lie that he dresses up in new terms, but it is pawned off as new revelation.

It's the cry of the cults from Scientology to Mormonism. "You can become God yourself!" It's the ultimate lie, the ultimate sin, man wanting to become God himself. It's still going on.

But, because people do not find what they are looking for in their own divinity, many of them have gone into a fourth category known as the Occult, or the Spiritist Cults.

### **The Spiritist Cults or the Occult**

This category of cult spans the whole universe of darkness - everything from astrology to tarot cards, palmistry, numerology, people involved in witchcraft and Satanism, going to séances, meeting with clairvoyants, channelers, etc.

St Paul warned us that in the last days before Christ returns at His second coming, we will see the rise of such evil.

*Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. 1 Tim. 4:1*

They bring with them a new Ba'alism, with the pursuit of pleasure as the location of the sacred. There develops a sacramental character of sexuality and drugs within their ranks. Their goal is the removal of all "hang-ups" and moral restraints; a totally free society; the attainment of "peak experiences".

Their salvation is through self-gratification and their central idol is the "Pleasure Principle," achieved through sensual pleasure and self-gratification.

### **In Summary**

Every one of these groups has its own idol/s of one sort or another. What's on top of the Mormon Temple in Salt Lake City? It's not a cross. At the highest pinnacle, there is Moroni, the angel of light, who told Joseph Smith that all the teachings of Christianity are an abomination, and that he could become God himself.



Mormonism is not of Jesus Christ. It's from the pit of hell, dressed up to look like Christianity, palmed off as a new revelation, bringing another Jesus and another gospel and another spirit, counterfeits, false apostles disguising themselves to look like Christians.

It's fascinating how many cults began by somebody getting a revelation from an angel of light. Read the history of Islam. One billion people today are following Islam because a man named Mohammed claimed to have received revelations from an angel of light, who told him Jesus Christ was not God, Jesus Christ did not die on a cross for man's sins, and that man can save himself by keeping the law of Mohammed.

### **The Jesus of the cults**

There is literally a smorgasbord of Jesus Christs being served up to the public. Who is the Jesus of the cults? Let us give you just a brief idea. Jesus said, in the last days there's going to come many false christs. Paul warned of it in the scripture above. We've got them by the hundreds today! By the millions if you believe **Shirley McLaine's** pronouncement that we are all "Jesus Christs."

**Who is the Jesus of Jehovah's Witnesses?** They say He is the archangel, Michael, and that He was the first creation of God, came to earth as a man, died on a stake and rose invisibly as a ghost.

**The Mormons** say that Jesus was simply one God in a pantheon of Gods, He's the brother of Satan, that the cross and blood of Christ is foolishness. He points the way, but we ourselves are our own 'way.'

**Mary Baker Eddy** taught in Christian Science that Jesus was a divine idea, a nice idea.

**Sun Myung Moon**, in the Unification Church, says that Jesus was a man who failed, and that he, Sun Myung Moon is the second coming of Jesus Christ.

**The Bahais** say that Jesus is one of nine great world manifestations. They say it does not matter what religion you believe, that all religions are basically the same.

**The Unitarians** say that Jesus was a good man but his followers mistakenly deified him. The spiritists say that Jesus is an advanced medium in the sixth sphere in the astrological projection, wherever that is.

**The Rosacrucians** say that Jesus is the man at the station of cosmic consciousness.

**Maharishi and Transcendent Meditation** says Jesus was an enlightened guru who never suffered or died for anyone. And the list goes on and on.

You need to understand that the Jesus of the cults is not the Jesus of the Bible. They have another Jesus, a counterfeit, a false Christ who can save no one. And the greatest question still before us is "Who do you think He is?"

### **Who is the real Jesus Christ? That's the ultimate question.**

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses*



*that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. 1 John 4:1-3*

John says to test these people. Do they confess that Jesus Christ is God come in the flesh? If they deny that, he says, then they are of the antichrist. Now there are many cults that believe that their particular Jesus was actually in the flesh. But John had already recorded for us in his gospel who this unique one is that has come in the flesh and is from God.

The other scripture is in the Book of John. John starts his gospel so there would be no mistake. God took on human flesh, God incarnate.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:1, 14*

The cults have another gospel, able to enslave you into a man-made system trying to earn and work for your salvation apart from Jesus Christ. But Jesus Christ *is* Jesus said to him, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* John 14:6

*Acts 4:12 says: Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*

Salvation is not a man-made system or organisation, but that it is a gift of God. It was bought and paid for by the eternal Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who was the infinite sacrifice, who shed His blood on the cross, for an infinite amount of sins, that we could come by faith and receive that free gift of salvation. That's why they call it "good news." It is the true power of God Himself in each and every one of us.