

What Is a Cult?

(In order to lay the foundation for dealing with particular cults a definition of a cult and identifying characteristics of cults will first be necessary.)

A cult is a perversion or distortion of biblical Christianity and a rejection of the historical teachings of the Christian church. Paul warned us that false teachings would arise (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Cults find fertile soil in the minds of many because:

- (1) Cults purport to answer man's basic questions:
Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?
- (2) Cults effectively meet the human need for love, acceptance, purpose, and meaning.
- (3) Cults often make a very favorable of warmth, moral values, and of being well informed.

Ten Common Characteristics of Cults:

- **New Revelations** of truth that supersede or contradict scripture
- **New Interpretations** of scripture which are inconsistent with historical Christianity
- **Non-biblical sources of authority** that clarify, redefine, or correct "errors" in the Bible
- **Redefinition of Jesus** so that He is not the same as revealed in scripture (i.e. the Mormon view that Jesus is not fully and eternally God but rather that He was one of many "gods" or that Jesus was the spirit-brother of Lucifer)
- **Rejection of historic Christianity** explaining that the church has departed from the truth and that they are "restoring" the lost truth
- **Double-Talk** using language that on its face has one common meaning in Christian truth but using it in such a way to mean something totally different (i.e. the Mormon article of faith that states, "*We believe... in His Son, Jesus Christ*" while not exposing clearly exactly what they believe about Jesus Christ)
- **Non-biblical teaching on the Nature of God** which often denies the Holy Trinity (i.e. such as the Jehovah Witness disavowal of Trinity)
- **Changing Theology** allows the doctrinal basis of a cult to be forever in flux as a result of "*new revelations*" said to be "*given by God*"
- **Salvation by Works** always calls men to salvation by belief in God plus "*do this*" or "*follow that*"
- **False Prophecy** used to reinterpret events of the past or to predict future expected events which later prove not to occur

Next Week: "Christianity and Mormonism"