

Marks of a Cult

What Cults Believe and Do
Matthew 7:15,16

I. Introduction (Matthew 7:15,16)

- A. Jesus said, “Beware of Wolves in Sheep’s clothing.” Matt 7:15,16 *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.*
- B. So, TRY** (examine and put on trial) **every teacher, every philosopher, every musician** (1John 4:1)
1. 1John 4:1 *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*
 2. Just because you like, or agree with what a religion or church teaches, means nothing!
 - a. 2Co 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.
 - b. 2Co 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.
 - c. 2Co 11:4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.
 - d. THAT IS, “IF” you don’t test everything you hear!
 3. So, Examine:
 - a. The _____ that they say – what they teach – compare thoroughly with the whole Bible (Acts 17:10-12)
 - 1) Listen – pay attention to them – to what they are SAYING. Not to the warm feeling you may get... That’s how you get free of Rock Music – by paying attention to the PROGRAMMING of the words and the music
 - 2) Notice all the Gobbledygook, airy-fairy, magical, meaningless words
 - 3) Take notice of all the Repetitious words
 - 4) Look for plain words
 - b. The _____ they use
 - 1) Man-based authority – headquarters, powerful speakers
 - 2) Popularity
 - 3) Or, Proven words of God that are absolute
 - c. The _____ of their beliefs
 - 1) People changed for the better
 - 2) Marriages restored
 - 3) Minds restored
 - 4) Wayward children returned
 - 5) Stolen money repaid
 - 6) Real Joy, in the midst of hardships
 - 7) Love for the Bible, and Jesus supremely, and serving, etc!
- C. Let’s come up with a list of things that are common in all cults – these are not just slight differences that can exist between people, but vast differences that cannot be ignored, or merged into one – they are like square pegs that cannot fit in round holes!**

II. Message

A. They _____ Man ...

1. All the old mythological religions of Greece and Rome made Mankind into gods, if they tried hard enough!
2. Through good works, a cult will always make it possible for a man to become a god.
 - a. Scientology – controlling your universe
 - b. Mormons – “As man is, God once was. As God is, man may become”
 - c. Catholicism – Mary became a mediatrix, able to influence and guide her Son
 - d. Buddha – escaped life through suffering and perfection
 - e. In other words, Man only needs to 'progress' (as defined by the cult and only with the cult's help) to become like God. (Genesis 3:1-13; Isaiah 14:9-19 [the same sin Satan was guilty of]; 2 Thess 2:3-4)
 - f. Humanism (atheism) is a cult – makes Man into a god
3. The Bible is very _____ about what man is, and very limited as to what a human can become:
 - a. Vile sinner – who can become saved by God’s grace, not by good works (Philp 3:21; Eph 2:8,9)
 - b. A child of God, yes – but by adoption, not by effort either!
 - c. NEVER a god!
 - d. We can only become a perfect man, like Adam – bet never a god ourselves!

B. They Have a Modern Day _____ ...

1. Their cult will always be Founded by man, followed by other men or leaders, who claim to be God's one true spokesman on Earth. Accountable to no one but God. Gives revelation and scripture.
2. Their leaders tend to be absolute, prophets of God, God Himself, specially anointed apostle, or just a strong, controlling, manipulative person who demands submission even if changes or conflicts occur in ideology or behavior.
3. They claim special knowledge and or skills, demand unquestioning obedience with power and privilege, excessive discipline and expectations. Demand perfection at all times.
4. Some cults place extreme emphasis on prophecy (Jehovah’s Witness). The Mormons emphasize priestly authority, secret rituals and symbols, and Christian Science and the gnostic cults ground their experience in metaphysical pantheism and physical healing.
5. The Bible says: (Jeremiah 23; Matthew 24:24; Hebrews 1:1-2; Deut 13:1- 10 and 18:20-22)

C. They Humanize _____ ...

1. They deny that God is ONE eternal Being that is unlike ANYTHING in this universe!
 - a. They make God either IN this universe, or a part of this universe.
 - b. Yet, according to the Bible, God is OUTSIDE of both TIME, and SPACE – He is EXTERNAL!
2. They deny the Trinity.
 - a. They allow for 'many' gods, and redefine God into Man's image. (Romans 1:21-25; Isaiah 43:10-11 and 44:6-8; Psalm 90:2)
 - b. Even though there are more verses for the trinity than for the first coming of Jesus!
3. According to the Bible, man was made in the image of God INTERNALLY:
 - a. Free-will

- b. Creativity
- c. Emotions
- d. Eternal
- e. Basically, Man is like God – has a lot of God’s characteristics

4. But, according to the Bible, God is NOT like Man (Num 23:19; Mal 3:6)

D. They Minimize _____ ...

1. Instead of man's very nature being sinful and separated from God, sin is defined only as specific acts (different with each religion) that through good works can be perfected.
 - a. Catholics can't eat meat on Fridays (or at least couldn't eat meat on Fridays)
 - b. Hindus can't eat Cow meat
 - c. Catholic priests can't marry – bad sin
 - d. Jehovah's Witnesses can't have blood transfusions
2. Hell is many times redefined into a bland or non-existent punishment.
 - a. Pope John Paul II said hell was a “state of mind in eternity – not a place”
 - b. Most protestants don't believe in a literal hell at all anymore – Jesus was not really talking about a real place – just trying to scare people
3. The Bible has a different view on sin and hell (Romans 3:23; 1 John 3:4; 1:8-10; Gal 3:10; Luke 18; Revelation 20:14-15)

E. They _____ The Scriptures ...

1. They will _____ additional scripture or _____ from it in order to accommodate their private doctrines
 - a. The Catholic church added 6 books to the Old Testament to accommodate prayers for the dead, prayers to the saints, working for and earning salvation, etc.
 - b. They also add about 35 volumes of books, totalling tens of thousands of pages of teachings by dozens and dozens of church ‘fathers’ that count as the Traditions of the Church, and are believed to be EQUAL with the Scriptures!
 - c. Mormons added an entirely new “Testament” – the book of Mormon
 - d. All new Bibles take away verses and add words – no wonder modern Christianity is so diverse and weird! There is no absolute authority
2. They will claim that there are _____ in God's Word.
 - a. So they in their better wisdom, constantly correct the Bible
 - 1) “This unfortunate translation...”
 - 2) “A better word here in the text would be...”
 - 3) “Older and more accurate manuscripts lack this or that verse..”
 - b. But, How can that be? If God wrote it, how can there be errors in it?
 - c. They always want to get people who believe the Bible to disregard the Bible, and instead TRUST THEM!
 - d. No Pope ever believed the Scriptures were without error – only that the Church was without error
 - e. Muslims always set out to “prove” errors in the Bible – full of errors – cannot be trusted at all. The only true Torah is found in the Koran!
3. They continually _____ of meaning in scripture.
 - a. All cultists change the meaning of words from the Biblical definition!
 - b. They are familiar with Christian terminology, but have carefully redefined it to fit the system of thought embraced by them.
 - c. Take a word and define it any way they want, out of context, and with no dictionary

- 1) "Salvation" – a progressive thing, never complete, even after death. "Salvation is [when you] become the person God wants you to be here and now." Rev Robert Shuller
 - 2) "Grace" – a measure of spiritual energy that you must work for
 - 3) "The Faith" – THEIR faith, not Christ's faith (Gal 2:20)
 - 4) "God" – THEIR idea of God (male, female, genderless, etc)
- d. To a cult, "Born again" means getting baptized, or means "a new phase in life", etc.
 - e. Both Christian science and Unity talk of God as Trinity, however, their real concept of God is an abstraction. Christian Science says, "Life, Truth, and Love constitute the Triune divine principles."
 - f. EXAMPLE: A doctor who announces that he will perform open heart surgery, but actually removes a gall bladder, then defends his action by saying that "open heart surgery actually MEANS removal of the gall bladder in HIS VOCABULARY, could not practice medicine for very long.
4. Cultists answer the objections of Christians with the meaningless phrase,
 - a. "You interpret the Bible your way; I'll interpret it mine. Let's be broad minded. After all, one interpretation is as good as another."
 - b. Yet 2Peter 1:19 says, We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that **no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation**. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.
 5. The Bible says: Luke 21:33; Rev 22:18-19; Isaiah 40:8; Acts 17:11

F. They Promote A _____ Jesus ...

1. To a cult, Jesus is not the Son of God, but rather a son of A god
2. or He was just a prophet - Muslims
3. or a created god – Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses
4. or our elder brother - or just a good man or a teacher.
5. But the Bible says: Isa 9:6-7; John 1:1-14; Col 1:15-20; Heb 1:1-12

G. They Promote A Different _____ ...

1. Deny Salvation by Grace, by the shed blood of Jesus on the Cross at Calvary and by true repentance of sin by a sinner.
2. Usually will not see a cross on the cult's structures.
3. Salvation must be by works, and quite often by a system dictated by the cult.
4. But the Bible says: Eph 2:8-10; Gal 3:1-26; 1 Peter 2:24

H. They Promote Different _____ ...

1. The Holy Spirit is changed into a 'good force' or impersonal entity.
2. They deny God the Spirit.
3. Spiritism is, generally, rampant by having visits from spirits, and angels, and an abundance of counterfeit miracles, etc.
4. But the Bible says: I Timothy 4:1; Deut 18:9-14; John 14:17

I. They Promote _____ Over _____ ...

1. Emotions, intuitions, mystical insights are promoted as more important than rational conclusions.
2. The Book of Mormon says, "And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God... if these things [in the Book of Mormon] are not true; and if ye

shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (not by verifiable facts). They basically say, pray about the Book of Mormon, and if you get a warm burning in your bosom, then that should be proof enough it is truly from God. Baloney!

3. The hard task a soul-winner has is getting people to think – please allow them to ask questions – it is the epitome of rudeness to not deal with questions – gauge whether the question is a valid one or a waste of time. **THEY MUST THINK SALVATION THROUGH** or they are not going to believe in Jesus – they will just be believing YOU!
4. Denigration of Critical Thinking
 - a. Can go so far as to characterize any independent thought as selfish, and make the rational use of intellect as evil.
 - b. The Bible says (Isa 1:18) that what we decide to believe ought to be reasonable
- J. _____ **mindedness**. They are not interested in a rational, logical evaluation of the facts. If you have ever had an encounter with Jehovah’s Witnesses, then you know that they simply will not speak logically.
- K. **They Believe _____ are The Only True Church ...** Elitist
 1. Their group is the only true way to perfection. The word 'truth' used over and over. Unless you are an active part of their organization, you are lost. They deny the spiritual priesthood of believers.
 2. The Bible says: Col 1:18; Eph 1:22-23; Romans 12:1-8; 2Pet 1:20)
- L. **They Promote _____ ...** Closed to the outside world ...
 1. Secret rituals, temples and doctrines. Finances not public. No communion with Christian body. All others are outsiders. No one knows the truth as they (and their prophet) do.
 2. They have an End Justifies the Means mindset - Any action or behavior is justifiable as long as it furthers the group's goals. The group (leader) becomes absolute truth and is above all man-made laws.
 3. The Bible says: Mt 24:23-26
- M. **They _____**
 1. They are obsessed with it!
 2. They either:
 - a. Declare sex itself as evil
 - b. Or make sex something only **THEY** can do amongst themselves – free sex, wife swapping
 3. Catholicism made sex sinful, and declared celibacy the best
 4. The Mormons approve of having multiple wives and concubines
 5. Modern religious leaders are very prone to an addiction to sex with girls and boys
 6. All cults leave off the obvious principles of:
 - a. Sex is designed and honoured by God – there is no shame or sin in sex itself
 - b. God limited sex to only a married couple
 - c. Between a man and a woman
 - d. And for life
 - e. All other forms of sex are fornication, incest, and adultery, and are condemned by God
- N. **You Cannot _____ ...**
 1. Muslims, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, etc... They are **ALL** the same! You cannot leave!
 2. Always testing the loyalty of followers.

Introduction to Cults

3. To a cult, Obedience (blind obedience) is the primary goal.
4. Leaders have all power – the Leaders are a follower's intermediary with God - not Jesus. So, if you are not close to, and obedient to THEM, then you will never be close to God!
5. The Only way to leave is by excommunication, or death.
6. Spiritual bondage, fear and guilt most common. If you leave, you are doomed.

III. Conclusions

- A. Satan always takes what God originally creates, and then twists and perverts it. That is what he has done with Truth, the Bible, Religion, Marriage, etc
- B. A short list of CULTS – belief systems that are not just different, but vastly different than the Bible's clear teaching:
 1. **The Roman Catholic Church**
 2. **The Mormons** – Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
 3. **Jehovah's Witnesses**
 4. **Seventh Day Adventists** – Sabbath and Law keepers
 5. **Muslims**
 6. **British Israelism** – Armstronism - believing the Brits are the lost tribes of Israel
 7. **The Bahá'í Faith**, Bahá'u'lláh
 8. **Christian Science**
 9. **Churches of Christ**
 10. **Freemasonry**
 11. **Unification Church** (Rev. Moon)
 12. And **Atheists** – dogmatic religionists. The assertion, to be taken on faith, that there is no God
- C. God gave us an open Book
 1. Open to discovery
 2. Open to testing
 3. Open to debate
 4. Open to disagreement
- D. The only way to stay free from cults is to stay only Bible – never mix anything with it!

V. Conclusion

- A. **Next Week, Taking a Look at The Mormons!**