

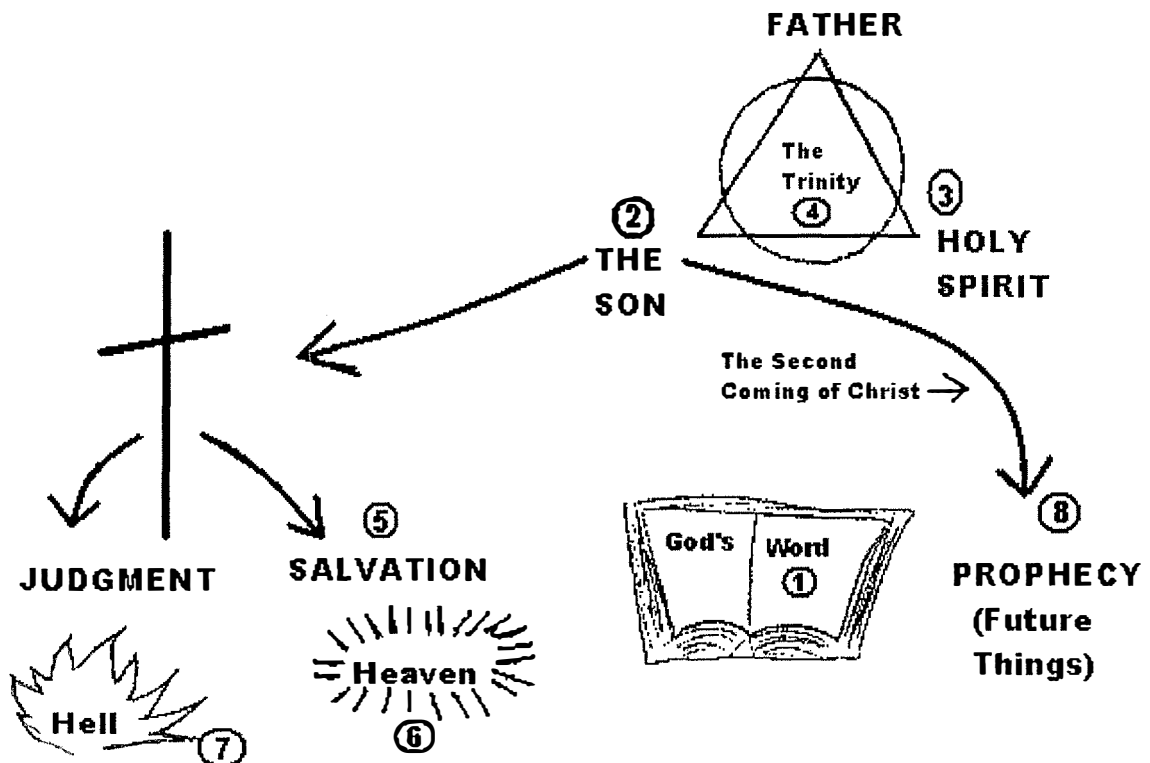
CHAPTER 10

The Confusion of the Cults

Have Jehovah 's Witnesses ever knocked at your door? Have you ever passed by a building with the name "KINGDOM HALL"? Has your family ever been visited by young, well-dressed Mormon missionaries? Have you ever seen a church called "THE CHURCH OF THE LATTER DAY SAINTS"? Have you been to a shopping center, airport or some other public place and seen certain people in strange clothes or with an unusual appearance (heads shaven, etc.) passing out literature or trying to sell their magazines to people? All of these are examples of what we could call cults.

DOCTRINES OF DEMONS (1 TIMOTHY 4:1)

Satan loves to confuse people and turn them away from the truth as it is found in God's Word. The devil is able to use the cults as a way of getting people tricked and trapped into false teaching. The following chart shows the great doctrines of the Christian faith and in the following paragraphs we will see how the cults deny and disbelieve these important truths:



Let us now consider some of these important doctrines and see what the cults do with them (the numbers on the chart correspond to the numbers given in the following headings:)

1. The Bible

Quite often, people who belong to certain cults say that they believe the Bible. They have been trained to find verses from the Bible and they can often quote many verses from memory. People might think, "Their religion must be the true religion because they seem to know the Bible so well!"

Don't be deceived! Just because a person **uses** the Bible does not mean that he knows the God of the Bible. Who quoted from the Scriptures in Matthew 4:5-6 (and compare Psalm 91:11-12)?

_____ If Satan can use the Scriptures, cannot his followers do the same?

_____ The Sadducees once quoted from the Bible (see Matthew 22:24) but they did not even believe the Bible (see Matthew 22:23)!

The Bible can be used and misused and abused. People have used the Bible to prove almost anything. Even an atheist could say, "The Bible says that **THERE IS NO GOD**. It says so in Psalm 14:1." Is this what the Bible really says? People often take verses out of context. This means that they do not carefully read what comes before the verse and what comes after the verse. If we read the context of Psalm 14:1, then we discover that this verse really teaches that the atheist is a F_____.

How should we read the Bible? Should we make the Bible say what we want it to say or should we let the Bible say just what it says? Circle which way is better:

- a. I first decide what I want to believe, and then I go to the Bible and try to prove that my belief is right and try to find verses that seem to say what I want the Bible to say.
- b. I first go to the Bible to find out what God has said, and then I believe whatever God says, even if I do not fully understand it.

For example, a person might say, "I WANT TO ROB THE BANK, TAKE THE MONEY AND GO ON A FIVE MONTH VACATION. I'm going to go to the Bible and see if it is all right to do this." He then finds two verses which seem to support his wicked plans:

- 1) 1 Corinthians 10:23--"ALL THINGS ARE LAWFUL FOR ME"
- 2) Philippians 4:13--"I CAN DO ALL THINGS"

Is he using the Bible in the right way? _____ The Apostle Peter once warned us about those who would WREST (twist, distort) THE SCRIPTURES unto their own D_____. (2 Peter 3:16).

Not only do the cults twist the Scriptures and take verses out of context, but they also ADD to the Scriptures. For example, the Mormons have another book which they consider to be just as true and just as inspired as the Bible. They call this the *Book of Mormon*. Those who belong to the Christian Science cult have a book called *Science and Health With Key to the Scriptures*, and

all those who are "seeking for the truth" are told to read this book. The Jehovah's Witnesses also have their books and magazines which are supposed to help people understand the Bible correctly.

It is very dangerous to add man's words to God's Word. God has warned us not to do this (Proverbs 30:5-6 and Revelation 22:18). What man really needs is THE BIBLE, THE WHOLE BIBLE AND NOTHING BUT THE BIBLE!

2. The Son of God

In 2 John 7 we are told that there are many D_____ in the world who do not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. These deceivers are in error when it comes to their doctrine (teaching) of Christ. They do not believe that Jesus Christ is GOD WHO CAME IN THE FLESH AND BECAME A MAN. Our Lord and Saviour is the GOD-MAN, and most of the cults deny this.

For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses say that Jesus is not God. They teach that God **created** Jesus as a great angel and then Jesus created everything else. This makes Jesus a CREATURE-- someone lower than God and less than God. The Bible says that "the Word (Jesus) was G_____" (John 1:1).

How important is it that people believe the right thing about Jesus (see John 8:24)?

3. The Holy Spirit

Many cults deny that the Holy Spirit is a real PERSON. Again, let's listen to what the Jehovah's Witnesses say:

As for the "Holy Spirit," the so-called "third Person of the Trinity," we have already seen that IT is not a person but God's active force (*The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*, page 24).

Thus they refer to the Spirit as an "IT" and not as a person (to describe a person we would say "HE" but to describe a force we would say "IT," like the force of a storm where we might say "IT thundered and the lightning caused much damage"). Did the Lord Jesus describe the Holy Spirit as a person (using personal pronouns like "he, himself") or did He describe the Holy Spirit as an "IT" (see John 16:13-14)?

4. The Trinity

Throughout the centuries true Christians have believed that there is one God and this one God makes Himself known in three Persons--Father, S_____ and _____ Ghost or Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Many of the cults deny that there is a Trinity. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses say that only JEHOVAH is God. They say that Jesus is not God and the Holy Spirit is not God and thus they deny the doctrine of the Trinity. Can you find the three Persons of the Trinity listed in 2 Corinthians 13:14?

5. Salvation

None of the cults teach the true way of salvation. They all teach salvation by works (see **Chapter 7** of these notes). They believe that they will be saved if they fulfill the many requirements that are demanded of them by the cult they are in. They believe that if they live a faithful life and do everything that they are supposed to do, then they hope to have eternal life. Salvation is something that they are working at and laboring for. In a Jehovah's Witness book it says, "By loving obedience to Him (God), you will put yourself in the way that leads to eternal life" (*The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*, page 26). Does the Bible say, "Obey God and thou shalt be saved" (see Acts 16:31)? _____ [Note: Once a person believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, they will want to obey the God who saved them. We don't obey in order to be saved; we obey because we are saved].

There is a simple way to test every person who is a member of a religious cult. All you need to do is ask him (or her) the very same question that is asked in Acts 16:30. You can go up to the cult member and say, "Let me ask you a very important question. What must a person do to be saved?" Then compare his (or her) answer to the correct answer that is found in Acts 16:31. **YOU CAN BE SURE THAT HIS (or HER) ANSWER WILL BE DIFFERENT THAN GOD'S ANSWER!** You can then show this person what God says about salvation.

Because cult members are trying to work their way to heaven by their own faithfulness and obedience, you will notice that they often seem to follow high moral standards. They may not drink or smoke. They may not get involved in worldly activities. They are often very clean cut and well dressed. They are careful about these things because they believe that in living this way they are earning their way to heaven.

Even though we know that salvation is by God's grace and not by our own good works or righteous deeds (Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5), why should we as true believers be careful about maintaining high moral standards? What is wrong with this statement: "Since I am saved by grace and going to heaven, I can live any way I please"?

6. Heaven

Since cult members believe that their salvation depends on their own faithfulness and obedience to certain requirements, they can never be completely sure that they will be in heaven. There is always the possibility that they will not measure up to the requirements and that they have not been faithful enough. Thus they have a very uncertain hope. They can never be sure, while in this world, that they have eternal life. They have no assurance of their salvation.

As God gives the opportunity, you could ask them this question: "Do you know for sure that you have eternal life and that you will spend eternity in heaven?" You can then share with them that you do have this assurance (see 1 John 5:13 and John 5:24).

They also have no good news for a dying sinner. Another question that you could ask is this: "Suppose a man were on his death bed with only five minutes to live. All his life he had lived in sin and great wickedness. What message of hope could you give to this person?" This is a difficult question for cult members, because this man would have no time to live a faithful life of obedience. Does the Bible give any hope for such a man (see 1 Timothy 1:15 and Luke 23:39-43)? _____

Note: Many cults also believe in "soul sleep." They say that when a believer dies, his soul sleeps until the resurrection. Between the time of his death and his resurrection, his soul will just sleep and he will not be conscious or aware of anything. Is this the true teaching of the Bible (Luke 23:43 and notice the word "This day" or "Today"; Philippians 1:21-23; 2 Corinthians 5:8)?

7. Hell

Most cults say that there is no such thing as ETERNAL PUNISHMENT (a punishment that lasts forever). Some, like the Jehovah's Witnesses, believe in ANNIHILATION. This means that a wicked person is destroyed in the flames and consumed so that he is no more! He ceases to exist. His punishment lasts just for a moment and then he is gone forever.

Did Jesus teach that there would be everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:46)? _____ How long will people be tormented in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10)?

8. Prophecy

Many of the cults have much to say about future events and the second coming of Christ. Many groups have foolishly tried to set dates for the Lord's return and the beginning of God's kingdom. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses teach that God's heavenly kingdom began its active rule in 1914 (the year in which World War I began).

Another man, William Miller, thought that Daniel 8:14 meant that Christ was to return in 1843. In October 1843 thousands who had accepted his teaching waited eagerly for the return of the Lord but they were greatly disappointed. A new date was set and the Lord was expected a year later--in October 1844. Again the Saviour did not appear. One of his followers, Ellen G. White, began what is now known as the Seventh-day Adventist movement. She taught that Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary in 1844 (this helped explain why no one saw Christ return; according to this theory, He did not come to earth; He came to the heavenly sanctuary).

In more recent years a man by the name of Edgar C. Whisenant predicted that Jesus would return in 1988. He wrote a book, *88 REASONS Why The Rapture Could Be In 1988*. A few years later a man named Harold Camping told everyone on his national radio broadcast that Jesus would come on or between Sept. 15, 1994 and September 27, 1994. Both of these men were greatly embarrassed and shown to be false teachers when their predictions did not come to pass.

What did the Lord say about the time of His return (Matthew 24:36,44)? _____ If Jesus taught us that no one knows the time of His coming, should we try to set dates? _____

SPOTTING THE COUNTERFEITS

It is impossible to study all of the cults in detail. There are too many of them and new ones are being formed every year. A person could spend a lifetime studying all the false doctrines of the many, many cults. How can we be trained to look at what a person or group teaches and spot what is false?

How are men trained to spot counterfeit twenty dollar bills? Are they given 20 different false twenty dollar bills and asked to spend hours studying the peculiarities of each one? Obviously that would be a waste of time. There is a much better way to discern the true from the false! These men take a true, genuine twenty dollar bill and they begin studying it. For many hours they examine this bill, noting every tiny mark and mastering every detail. They saturate their mind with what a true twenty dollar bill looks like and then the moment they see a false twenty dollar bill, they will be able to spot it immediately. They will be able to say, "Something is different about this! It just does not look right!"

The more we study and look at the truth as it is found in God's Word, the easier it will be for us to spot teaching that is in error. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye **continue in my word**, then are ye my disciples indeed; And **ye shall know the truth**, and the **truth shall make you free**" (John 8:31-32).

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE CULTS?

1. Active cult members are often more familiar with the Bible than many Christians. They know where to find verses and they seem to have an answer to every argument that you give them. They are very well trained in their false teachings. Because of this many Christians are afraid of talking with those who belong to a cult. If anyone should know their Bibles well, should not it be those who are born again Christians? And yet, sad to say, the average Bible believer is horribly ignorant of God's truth.
2. Usually a cult member is not ashamed of the false gospel which he preaches (see Romans 1:16). He is ready always to give an answer to every man that asks him a reason of the false hope that is within him (compare 1 Peter 3:15). If anyone should go forth proclaiming a message, it should be those of us who know and love the truth. **DO WE REALLY HAVE A MESSAGE OF GOOD NEWS?** If so, are we living it? Are we spreading it to others? Are we sharing it with others at every opportunity we have?
3. Cult members are totally indoctrinated by false teaching. Even though they are wrongly taught, they are well taught. They are well trained in their doctrines. There is nothing wrong with indoctrination, as long as the doctrine we are learning is sound, healthy doctrine. The TRUTH needs to be diligently taught to believers, and yet many of our churches are not doing this as they should. Believers are not being fed spiritually as they should. See our paper, **What is The Purpose of Local Church?**

“ Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ”

— Matthew 7:15