

## WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT A CULT

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(SUNDAY AM MEETING)

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Yesterday, while the Spirit was moving, and we were talking in terms of what is and what is not a cult, I jotted down a few things that I wanted to share on how do we know when worship, or a religious movement, is or is not a cult?

First of all and foremost, is that if we are worshipping Jesus Christ, then our worship has got to be of “Jesus Christ.” We have to recognize Jesus Christ as “Lord.” We have to recognize Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and as very God! So, if we believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, and Jesus Christ is God, and Jesus Christ is the Son of God, then that is one earmark of “true religious practice” (If I may say it that way).

However, in saying that Jesus Christ is God and is the Son of God, it has to be *“according to the scriptures.”* In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says that what he preached was that “Jesus Christ died, and was buried, and He was raised on the third day—*according to the Scriptures.*” More than once, he reiterated that it happened *“according to the Scriptures.”* Now, he was talking about the Old Testament Scriptures which foretold that certain things would happen to Jesus Christ, so that, in our Christology (our theology about Jesus Christ) it is not enough to have a theology about Jesus Christ, but we need to have a theology about Jesus Christ that is *according to the Scriptures.*

So then, (1) It must be Christ centered, and (2) It must be according to the Scriptures.

Now, I want to say something about this concerning our revelations and our visions. I use the word “revelation” loosely, because I would rather say, our “illuminations,” because I believe this (the Bible) is “the” revelation. This (the Bible handed down to us) is the complete and full revelation of God, and whatever we receive (by vision or prophecy, or interpretation of tongues, or anything we receive), it has to be *“according to the Scriptures.”*

As I said yesterday, sometimes there is no proof text so that we can say, “Well, right here, in this place, it says so and so.” Furthermore, we have to be careful of

those proof texts too, because sometimes the words they used are not even as in the original revelation.

So again, it has to be according to the Scriptures, and it has to be Christ centered; and a third way we can know that a doctrine or a teaching is authentic, and that something is not a cult, is that it is not one person (or an oligarchy of leadership) saying, "Well, this is what you are to believe!" When you have a movement that says, "Okay, this is what you believe, and there is no other way to it," then you know that you are in trouble!

Then, a fourth thing to look for, is that it is important "how" the Scriptures are interpreted. In Timothy he says,

*2 Timothy, 2:15 "STUDY to show yourself approved unto God; a workman who needeth not to be ashamed, RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH."*

That is a key scripture, because if you are allowed to study, then it is not a cult, because in a cult you do not need to study. Someone interprets for you, and you just need to obey what is handed to you by the leadership, and you just need to follow that. Moreover, you know there is trouble when you say, "What about this? It says here in the Bible that..." and you get this kind of an answer: "Well, what it says there, you had better put on the shelf, because this is what I have received!"

Now, in the interpretation of the Scriptures, that is where Mohammed got in trouble; that is where Joseph Smith got in trouble; that is where Koresh got in trouble; that is where the "Comet" people and all that get in trouble. It is that their interpretation of the Scripture was narrowed and twisted to follow something that a leader dreamed up and gave to them.

So then, if it is a cult—it is a "closed book!" In Phillipians 3:12, he said, "Not that I have already attained (received)...." Here, Paul uses the Greek aorist, "elabon," so the more accurate rendering would be, "Not that I have already RECEIVED." "Elabon," the aorist, means: "I have received it." "It is locked in, and that is that!" There is no progression to it. He said, "Not that I have already received or have already been made perfect, BUT I PRESS ON...." If your illumination and your learning of the Scriptures is progressive, then you are on the right track; because today I will read scripture, and next week will I read the same Scripture and will I get a little different light on it, and a clearer light on it. Also, some scriptures have many different applications to the different situations that you are in. So if somebody says, "Well, I have received this. This is it! There is nothing else to it. Do not bother to look it up in the Bible, because I received it and this is how it is." If this is what is being said, then you are in trouble! If there is no room for improvement, and "We have written the book on it, and there is no more to be said and no questions to be asked," then it is a cult.

So the very fact that you are here in an open forum says [that this is not a cult]. As a matter of fact, this movement could not be further from a "cult." The church where I go is more like a cult, because nobody gets up and asks (in the middle of the

service) any question; and you know beforehand who is going to speak and you know how long he is going to speak; and it is printed out what he is going to speak on. If he gets a revelation, he puts it out a week ahead of time; and if he gets a change, he will have to apologize for changing the subject! It is on the bulletin board outside and everybody passing on the street sees it.

So, it is not a cult, if you have a chance to question and if there is open-mindedness, and if everybody can get up and say their peace, whether they are right or wrong. Sometimes, I wonder if you do not have built in, something to sort of stop some people from talking? That, however, is the freedom then that you have in the Spirit!

Then, the fifth point is that if it is, "We have the 'truth' and everybody else has got to be wrong," then you are in trouble! I was in a dinner line some days ago, and we were talking with a man who belongs to such and such a church, and he asked one or two questions; and he was ready to tell you that if it is not his church—even if it does not have the same name that his church has—it is not the Church at all! I quickly got my food and went on for I did not want to continue that conversation, because I felt, you know, that that fellow was in trouble.

In 2 Timothy 2:17-18, it talks about those who teach falsely, and who keep chipping away with false doctrine.

*"And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred..."*

In the KJV they use the word "canker," but the Greek word there is "gaggraina," which means "gangrene." So from the original Greek, it says here, "And their word will eat as gangrene..." Now, you know what gangrene is. [It is something that corrupts one part of the body, and grows and grows and spreads to other parts of the body.] It is where you lose a toe nail, then you lose a joint, then you lose a toe, then you lose up to the ankle, then you lose up to the shin bone; and lose a knee, and then a leg, and then both legs; and then you lose your life! Gangrene is a canker that "rots away," and there are those within the flock, sometimes, who come into the flock and they drop a word here, and a word there, and it is like gangrene. However, the thing that will fight that "gangrene," is the pure Word of God. It says,

*2 Timothy 2:15 "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*

I hear a lot of emphasis on the young, and I do encourage you (the young people) to study and to read the Word. Check it out, and let one prophet prophesy, and let another judge! Thank you.

