

# Studies in Truth

Knowing Cults...

## A Definition:

- A system of religious beliefs and rituals with a body of adherents deeply devoted to an extra-biblical person, idea or thing; it cultivates worship in a religion that, with reference to its basis for man's salvation, is considered to be unorthodox, spurious, or false, thereby insulating its members against true salvation in Christ...all cultic deviations tend to down play the finished work of Christ and emphasize the importance of earning moral acceptance before God thru one's own religious works.

## 2 types of Cults

- Christian Cults
  - Those using the Bible to some extent
  - Mormons; JW's; Moonies; Christian Science
- Non-Christian Cults – replace Scripture
  - Baha'i; L Ron Hubbard; Divine Light Mission
- “world religions” = Islam; Buddhism; Sikh
- The response will vary, but the need is the same –
- An encounter with the **real JESUS!**

# Marks of a Cult:

1. Extra-biblical revelation
  - Many give a token response to the Bible
2. Salvation by works/legalism/abstention
  - Anything but faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ
3. No assurance of Salvation
  - Obligation to the cult/leader = bondage
4. Messiah/Guru/Prophet leader
  - Unquestioned and absolute authority

# Marks of a Cult (cont'd)

## 5. Doctrinal Ambiguity

- Very slow to reveal what they really teach
- Lying and deception are often acceptable

## 6. Exclusivity/Denunciation

- Anyone who questions is damned/excluded

## 7. Special discoveries

- Books, visions, revelations, dreams, etc

## 8. Defect in view of Christ

- Deny Divine/Human unified eternal nature

# Marks of a Cult (cont'd)

## 9. Defective nature of man

- “animal” who must become “god”

## 10. Out-of-context use of Scripture

- Exclusion of passages that teach truth
- Use Christian terms but change meanings

## 11. Error concerning Life/Death/Punishment

- “soul sleep”; no punishment; universalism

## 12. Entangling Organizational Structure

- Restrictions, slavish commitment, fear

## Marks of a Cult (cont'd)

13. Financial exploitation

14. **Syncretism** – blending of elements from many sources/doctrines

- While a cult may not use all these marks, the more they are evident, the more of a cultic influence that is present
- **Cults will use every effort to avoid being seen as a cult...**