

WHAT IS A CULT?

Words: 6291

Text: Acts 20:22-31

INTRO: I want to deal with a matter this morning that deserves some time and which I have pondered for some time. Let me put it in the form of a question: What is a cult? The term 'cult' is sometimes thrown around rather loosely by Christians. The word 'cult' does not occur in the Bible. It is a term used differently by different people and different groups to describe different concepts. So in determining what a cult is, one has to understand from whose viewpoint the definition comes.

Some time ago I listened to a certain topic by Ravi Zacharias and He defined what he sees as the meaning of the term 'cult' from a Christian perspective. I fully agree with him that when we speak to those outside the Christian faith we need to be careful how we use the term 'cult'. As a matter of fact, we need to be careful how we use it when we speak to Christians or when we brand other Christian groups as a cult.

I received an e-mail a while ago calling me a cult leader. I listened to Paul Washer's pastor some time ago and he said he was called a cult leader. Maybe some of you are accused of following a cult leader. Those who say these things are mostly ignorant of what a cult is, and surely none of them realize how serious the charge they are making is. Some day we must all stand before God Almighty and give account of our lives and without doubt, such charges, if not repented of, will be among them.

Some day when we stand before a thrice holy God we will not argue with what He has to say. Many Christians live as if going to heaven will be only glorious. But there is a judgment coming in heaven that will, for many, not be glorious. I encourage anyone who thinks it will be all glorious to listen to our messages, "Your First Day In Heaven." Every true Christian will stand before the judgement seat of Christ some day, and not only

will we give account for such charges, but for every idle or useless word we have spoken.

On the other hand, we should be able, as Christians, to identify those that are truly cults and be able to defend the faith when we meet them. So it is important that when we speak of a cult, that we know what we are talking about.

I. DEFINITION OF A CULT

A. A Secular Definition

So I want to begin by defining a cult from a secular perspective. The secular world defines a cult differently than Christians do, or than Christians should. Here is a secular definition I took from the internet. They give their definition as:

A system of religious veneration and devotion directed toward a particular figure or object.

They then give this example: "the cult of St. Olaf".

They then give two identification points. The first point is:

- 1. A relatively small group of people having religious beliefs or practices regarded by others as strange or sinister.*

Here they give this example: "a network of Satan-worshipping cults".

The second identification point is:

- 2. A misplaced or excessive admiration for a particular person or thing.*

This last definition is sometimes used by professing Christians. Some professing Christians refer to other Christian groups as a cult based on the fact that some groups follow a pastor. Very few if any who make those accusations have ever studied what a cult is other than to look at what others indicate as marks of a cult. Misplaced or excessive admiration for any

particular person or thing is wrong, whether in Christianity or any other movement.

But, on the other hand, it is God that chose that those who would lead His people in the Church age should be called pastors. Now there are several names given to the office of the spiritual leader of a true church. They are referred to as elders. This refers to spiritual maturity. They are referred to as bishops, which speaks of oversight. They are to oversee the spiritual matters of a church. And then they are referred to as a pastor or a shepherd.

Ephesians 4:11 says this:

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers...

Verse 11 speaks of these spiritual leaders as pastors. The word 'pastor' comes from the Greek word meaning a shepherd. It occurs 18 times in the NT and has been translated as 'shepherd' 17 times and 'pastor' only once. Pastor has become the most common name for the office of the spiritual leaders of a church. It means he is a shepherd. The word shepherd occurs twice more in the Epistles. We find it in Hebrews 13:20 like this:

Hebrews 13:20 Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

We find it again in 1 Peter 2:25 which says:

1 Peter 2:25 For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

So twice Jesus Christ is referred to as the chief Shepherd. In this last verse He is also referred to as an Overseer, or what we would call a bishop. Now we note here that He is the chief Shepherd, which means there are shepherd underlings, and those are what we call pastors.

Now let me ask, what is the task of a shepherd? It is to lead! What then is the task of a sheep? It is to follow. Let

me say this; if you have a shepherd you cannot follow you should not be under his leadership. And if you can and do follow a true pastor, you are not in a cult, you are in a good Church!

If you have a pastor whom you cannot follow because he is not walking right, you do not have a pastor, you have a false shepherd. If you overlook failures in the example of pastors, excusing it with, "Well, everybody has some issues", do you really have a pastor? A pastor is a shepherd. A shepherd goes before the flock. You should have a pastor whose example in life you can follow.

So when Christians call some group a cult because they follow the example of their pastor, they may be found guilty of a kind of blasphemy. I believe Ravi Zacharias is right when he says that when you define a cult you have to determine from what view you are defining it. As Christians, we are interested in defining what a cult is from a Christian perspective, not a secular perspective.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1:

1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

Any pastor should be able to say that. So, let us look at the term 'cult' from a Christian perspective.

B. A Christian Definition

1. From Gotquestions.org

I sometimes use the internet site, "Got Questions.org" and they have this question and answer regarding cults:

Question: "What is the definition of a cult?"

Answer: *When people hear the word cult, they often think of a group that worships Satan, sacrifices animals, or takes part in evil, bizarre, and pagan rituals. However, in reality, a cult rarely involves such things. In fact, a cult, in the broadest sense of*

the word, is simply a religious system with particular rites and customs.

Usually, though, a cult is more narrowly defined, and the word refers to an unorthodox sect whose members distort the original doctrines of the religion. In a Christian context, the definition of a cult is, specifically, "a religious group that denies one or more of the fundamentals of biblical truth." A cult is a group that teaches doctrines that, if believed, will cause a person to remain unsaved. A cult claims to be part of a religion, yet it denies essential truth(s) of that religion. Therefore, a Christian cult will deny one or more of the fundamental truths of Christianity while still claiming to be Christian.

The two most common teachings of Christian cults are that Jesus was not God and that salvation is not by faith alone. A denial of the deity of Christ results in the view that Jesus' death was insufficient to pay for our sins. A denial of salvation by faith alone results in the teaching that salvation is achieved by our own works. The apostles dealt with cults in the early years of the church: for example, John addresses the teaching of Gnosticism in [1 John 4:1-3](#). John's litmus test for godly doctrine was "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (verse 2)—a direct contradiction of the Gnostic heresy (cf. [2 John 1:7](#)).

The two most well-known examples of cults today are the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons. Both groups claim to be Christian, yet both deny the deity of Christ and salvation by faith alone. Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons believe many things that are in agreement with or similar to what the Bible teaches. However, the fact that they deny the deity of Christ and preach a salvation by works qualifies them as cults. Many Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and members of other cults are moral people who genuinely believe they hold

the truth. As Christians, our hope and prayer must be that many people involved in cults will see through the lies and will be drawn to the truth of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Now that is a good answer to the question: What is a cult? He separates defining it from a secular viewpoint or from Christian viewpoint, which is important. So notice what he said regarding when the term cult is used in a Christian context. He says:

In a Christian context, the definition of a cult is, specifically, "a religious group that denies one or more of the fundamentals of biblical truth." A cult is a group that teaches doctrines that, if believed, will cause a person to remain unsaved. A cult claims to be part of a religion, yet it denies essential truth(s) of that religion. Therefore, a Christian cult will deny one or more of the fundamental truths of Christianity while still claiming to be Christian.

In Christianity, when a group qualifies as a cult, it must deny some fundamental or essential doctrine to Christianity such as the deity of Christ, or salvation by grace through faith alone. If those expert in cults, such as Walter Martin of the past was, would go through what our church stands for, or any other church in our community, they would never refer to it as a cult. They might not agree with us on some secondary points but would never call us a cult.

B. From Ravi Zacharias

Now what originally inspired me to do a message on this subject was a message I listened to from Ravi Zacharias in which he gave a definition of a cult. He defined a cult as: *That which claims to be rooted in historic Christianity but has deviated or abandoned the finished work of Christ or compromised on His Person.*

Before we begin on that, let me set out some key distinctions that I feel are important. I would divide Ravi's definition into two distinct points. He speaks of those faiths that have deviated or abandoned the finished work of Christ or compromised on Christ's Person. I would distinguish between those who have deviated from the finished work of Christ or have compromised on His Person, and those who have abandoned these two areas.

I would view those who have abandoned these key areas as apostate churches. By using the word 'abandoned' it means they once had the truth, but they abandoned it. I would not call such groups a cult, but as an apostate church. To apostatize means to fall away from or abandon. Here we would have groups like the Roman Catholics or the United Church. Today, many evangelical churches are abandoning the true faith and becoming emergent. They have become, in my view, not a cult, but an apostate church.

On the other hand, I would take the view that those who do not count on the finished work of Christ for salvation or do not recognize the deity of Christ as cults. I would view such groups like Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses as cults, not because they abandoned some key doctrines, but because they hold that the Bible is the word of God but have never taught some of these fundamental doctrines. They have not had the truth and then abandoned it like the Roman Catholic church. These groups have never had the truth.

Recently I taught through the early parables of Jesus and I was greatly interested to learn some new things in one of Jesus' parables in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7. Turn to it. We find it in verses 13-14 like this:

13 *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.*

14 *"Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

Now in those days they did not have gates out in the middle of nowhere. They had gates in city walls. I see the city in this parable as representing the world. Now this city had two gates. Those who wanted to escape the city of destruction could only leave by one gate or the other. There was a narrow gate which few found, but it led to glory. Then there was a wide gate which all the rest who wanted to escape found easier and therefore went out by it. Now they often found this gate because there were false teachers standing at these gates. These false teachers led people to the wide gate.

The narrow gate pictures true Christianity. The wide gate pictures all those who claim to be Christian and use the Bible as the last parable in this chapter indicates. But the message they bring is not true. And through this gate go all those who profess to be Christians but they have never truly repented of their sins and they are playing church. And through this gate go all those who are in apostate churches and all those who are in cults. And they all think they are going to heaven when in fact, at the end they go to hell.

Of these Jesus said in the same context in verses 21-23:

21 *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*

22 *"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'*

23 *"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*

So, Gotquestions.org says: *In a Christian context, the definition of a cult is, specifically, "a religious group that denies one or more of the fundamentals of*

biblical truth." A cult is a group that teaches doctrines that, if believed, will cause a person to remain unsaved. A cult claims to be part of a religion, yet it denies essential truth(s) of that religion. Therefore, a Christian cult will deny one or more of the fundamental truths of Christianity while still claiming to be Christian.

Ravi Zacharias says a cult is, *That which claims to be rooted in historic Christianity but has deviated or abandoned the finished work of Christ or compromised on His Person.*

So those are some definitions of a cult from others now I want to give my own definition.

B. Personal definition

So let me give a personal definition of a cult. But before I do that let me point out which religious beliefs are not a cult.

1. Beliefs that are not a cult

From a Christian perspective I would not call Buddhism, Shintoism, Confucianism, Atheism, Agnosticism etc... cults. They do not use the Bible at all. By far the majority of the world is made up of such religions.

Now some may object that Buddhism and such like may not be classed as cults. So let us look at what religions of the world are. I mentioned earlier that recently I taught through the early parables of Jesus and that I had been greatly interested to learn some new things in one of Jesus' parables in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7. Turn to it. We find it in verses 13-14 like this:

13 *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.*

14 *"Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

So let me draw the picture this parable presents. We have two gates. Now you do not find gates out in the middle of nowhere. These gates are city gates. So we have a city. I would call this, like John Bunyan, in the allegory of Pilgrim's Progress, the city of destruction. And I believe this city represents the world.

And there are two gates, each leading onto a path. The broad gate leads onto a broad path and the narrow gate onto a narrow path. Both gates promise escape from the city of destruction. The narrow gate, without question, speaks of the true way of salvation. It is narrow and the way is difficult. It is not salvation that is difficult, it is walking the path that is difficult.

The broad road is a little more difficult to interpret. But here is how I see the broad road. It is the road that uses the Bible and professes to help onto the right path to glory. But at the gates of these paths are false prophets who seek to lead people who profess to lead people onto the right road, but in fact they are leading them onto a path that will end them up in hell, just like they would have had they remained in the city. And what makes this road so deceptive is that they use the Bible.

Now you might say, "What makes you think that those on this path are misled by the Bible instead of such teachings as Budhism and other such religions that don't use the Bible?" Well, look at verses 22-23:

22 *"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'*

23 *"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"*

Here we have an identification of the false prophets. They said, "Lord, Lord." They were professing Christians. They cast out demons and did many wonderful works. They profess to be Christians. But the Lord says they were never saved.

Verses 24-27 give further evidence that we are talking about those who have heard the Word of God. It speaks of two men, each of whom built a house. Both of these men heard the sayings of Jesus, and professed to do them. That is not true of Buddhism and the many other religions who do not use the Bible. When Jesus speaks of the broad road He refers, I believe, to all those who use the Bible and claim to be Christians, but they are not. This includes all nominal Christians who sit in true evangelical churches. But among those are those, who from a Christian perspective, are referred to as cults.

So let me share what I see a cult as being. There are two very key areas and these areas involve the Bible and the Person and work of Christ.

2. What a cult is

a. Regarding the Bible

With regard to the Bible, any religion that adds anything to the Bible as God's Word, as I see it, is a cult. Here we have such groups as the Mormons. They add the books, the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price and Doctrine and Covenants to the Bible. Some Seventh Day Adventists use Ellen G. White's writings as divine. Whenever a group uses some writer's material as divine that is not in the Bible, this is a cult.

The JW's, though they don't add any books to the Bible, they add to their translation of the Bible to get it to teach what they want it to say.

b. Compromises the finished work of Christ

The second group I would call a cult is any faith that is compromised on the finished work of Christ for salvation, as Ravi Zacharias teaches. For example, when certain works are required for salvation, this is adding to the finished work of Christ.

Any faith that places stress on works for salvation qualifies as a cult. This is a point cults have in common with apostatized churches. I am not saying that works are not important. Here is how I put it: Good works do not bring about salvation, but true salvation will bring about good works.

c. Compromises on the Person of Jesus Christ

And third, any faith that is compromised on the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ is a cult. When such doctrines as the virgin birth of Christ or His deity are denied, that cannot be a true Christian faith and there are many of these such as Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses.

So, here is my definition of a cult: A cult is any faith that uses the Bible as the Word of God, but adds to Scripture, or compromises on the finished work of Christ for salvation, or compromises on the Person and work of Christ.

III. EXAMPLE OF A CULTS

We want to now look at one example of a cult. I was going to give you several examples of what cults generally believe, but I won't have time. Two very key areas are, who is

Jesus Christ? And the second is what they believe about the Bible. There are other points, but these two are key to most.

A. What Do Mormons Believe About Jesus Christ?

So we ask first, what do Mormons believe about Jesus Christ?

We do not have time to go through areas here in detail and we will leave out many other areas that could be covered. But let me ask, "What do Mormons believe about Jesus?" I quote from an internet article taken from the Mormon's Newsroom. It says:

The following excerpts are taken from an address to the Harvard Divinity School in March 2001 by Robert L. Millet, former dean of religious education at Brigham Young University. It is offered on Newsroom as a resource.

What Do We Believe About Jesus Christ?

Latter-day Saints are Christians on the basis of our doctrine, our defined relationship to Christ, our patterns of worship and our way of life.

What Do We Believe About Christ?

- We believe Jesus is the Son of God, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh (John 3:16). We accept the prophetic declarations in the Old Testament that refer directly and powerfully to the coming of the Messiah, the Savior of all humankind. We believe that Jesus of Nazareth was and is the fulfillment of those prophecies.
- We believe the accounts of Jesus' life and ministry recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the New Testament to be historical and truthful. For us the Jesus of history is indeed the Christ of faith.. (I left out a section here and will include it in a point under their view of the Bible.)
- We believe that He was born of a virgin, Mary, in Bethlehem of Judea in what has come to be known as the meridian of time, the central point in salvation history. From His mother, Mary, Jesus inherited

mortality, the capacity to feel the frustrations and ills of this world, including the capacity to die. We believe that Jesus was fully human in that He was subject to sickness, to pain and to temptation.

- **We believe Jesus is the Son of God the Father and as such inherited powers of godhood and divinity from His Father, including immortality, the capacity to live forever.** While He walked the dusty road of Palestine as a man, He possessed the powers of a God and ministered as one having authority, including power over the elements and even power over life and death.

<https://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/what-mormons-believe-about-jesus-christ>

Well, there is much more but we'll leave it with that. There are very concerning statements in what we just read which we won't take time for. I expect that the average Christian would go through that and find little if anything amiss, and mostly it is good. That is the problem with deception. That is the problem with false prophets. But let me share something I believe to be very important here. I'll give it to you in the words of my sister-in-law and her discussion with Mormons. I asked for her account and it goes something like this:

It was just before Christmas. I was baking cookies when three Mormon ladies stood at my door. They wanted me to watch a short video about three minutes long. I told them I was busy at the moment and they should come back later. They left the video with me and the more I watched the more disturbed I became. You would never have known this was not some Christian video. They had the Gospel in it, except for repentance. They told about Jesus' death, burial and resurrection and that you have to believe in Him. It could have come from any evangelical church. I realized how deceitful this was.

I had studied up on Mormons and JW's so I could challenge them when they came to my door. When these Mormons came I wanted some time to prepare how to answer, but as I was busy baking cookies I did not have time to prepare myself. Well, about four hours later they were back.

But as I went to the door something dawned on me about the cookies I was making.

First of all, "Please tell me all about your Jesus, specifically." So they told me all the things you would naturally believe as a Christian about Jesus. Then I said, "But you have left something out." When they did not tell me anything further, I said, "You left out that you believe Jesus is the brother of the devil. You failed to tell me that." It was obvious that they knew this about their teaching.

Then I said, "Let me give you an example of what I am talking about." So offered them a cookie, but they did not take one. But I said, "If I offered you a cookie and told you all the ingredients and explained how good they are, but did not tell you that I had put a little poison in the cookies, what would you call me?" Well, they came up with things like 'murderer' and a number of other things and finally they said, "Well, that would be deceitful."

Then I began to explain to them that their Jesus could not save them from their sins. If He is not God He would not be sinless and only if He was sinless could He save them." The first lady, the leader of the group, then ran off the yard. The second lady looked at me and I explained again that their Jesus could not save her, and she ran off. That left the third, and younger lady there standing and looking at me for a while longer. I looked at her very seriously and explained that her Jesus could not save her and then she ran off.

I have seen them in town sometimes and invited them back, but they won't come back. End quote.

You see, when you ask them what they believe about Jesus, they may tell you what most whom they talk to want to hear, but there is a whole lot they do not tell you. You see, we are talking about what we speak of when we truly speak of those that are cults from a Christian perspective.

John Ankerberg, an American, Baptist and a Christian television host who has authored more than 158 books and study guides, and who has written much on the cults interviewed several former Mormons. First was Sandra Tanner, the great-great granddaughter of Brigham Young, the second president of the Latter Day Saints, or Mormons. Also interviewed were Lynn and Michael Wilder. Lynn was once a professor at the Brigham Young University. Let me give you a part of that interview:

Ankerberg: *Dr. Wilder, let me ask you this question. When I go to the official website of the Mormon Church, I think I'm reading a Christian doctrinal statement. For example, you will find that this is what they say they believe: "Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world and the son of God. He is our redeemer." "We believe in the Jesus of the New Testament. We believe what the New Testament teaches about him." And it sounds just like what we're talking about, but it's not. So why do they put that kind of wording on their website? What's going on?*

Lynn Wilder: *There's been a real push in the Mormon public relations area in recent years for Mormons to say, "We're Christians, too." Right now there's a campaign out there called "I am Mormon" in 21 major markets. The church has a lot of money and they've done a lot of public relations in the years. Twenty, thirty years ago, they were putting ads in Reader's Digest; they always have Mormon ads on television. It's important to them that they're seen as part of the kind of mainstream Christian environment.*

Ankerberg: *Didn't I read in one of your books that you said there was a time when Mormons did not want to be called Christian?*

Tanner: *Well, you read through the early sermons of the church leaders, and they speak of the Christian world as being the whore of Babylon, the church of the devil. Even the Book of Mormon says there's only two churches...only—the church of the lamb of God and the church of the devil. And so when Joseph Smith prays to know what church to join, God tells him, don't join any of them, for they're all corrupt. So that*

Mormonism is the only church of God; it's the only Christian church. Their whole claim dismisses everyone else as being part of Christ's church.

L. Wilder: *John, probably 80% of the converts that go into Mormonism come from Protestant and even Evangelical Christianity; folks who believe that Mormons are Christians, and this is just another option. And so, because those folks are kind of feeding their church, then it makes sense that the public relations would be kind of geared to making them feel comfortable.*

Ankerberg: *Michael, let me ask you why... Are they "Christianizing" Mormonism?*

Michael Wilder: *Well, they're making it appear that way. They still teach the doctrine of what Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and so forth. But they're trying to make it sound like more like "Christian-ese," so that, as Lynn mentioned, they're getting their converts from other Christian churches. So, when the Mormon missionaries are out knocking on doors, if you say you're a Christian, they don't say, "God bless you," and move on to try to find somebody who is not a Christian. They say, "Well, we would like to come in and teach you more." Because, it's not about bringing people to Christ, it's bringing people to the Mormon Church. That's what they want. So the more Christians they can get in, the more members they have. That means the more tithing money is coming in; because once you become an active member, and before you can even be baptized in the Mormon Church, you have to state that you will pay a full tithe to the Mormon Church. It doesn't count anyplace else that it goes, it's got to be to the Mormon Church.*

Ankerberg: *Sandra, give me a comparison of the Mormon Jesus versus the biblical Jesus. And do this in terms of the virgin birth; who he was in terms of while he was on this earth; what happened at the cross; and what happened after the cross; on both sides.*

Tanner: *Well, you have to even go earlier than that. The Mormons believe that we were all born as spirit children of Heavenly Father. And so Jesus is my older brother. I'm*

the same species as him. Right there you're denigrating Christ by saying every one of us here in the room had equal standing at some point, in some prior life. Jesus was picked by God to be the savior, but it could have been Michael. See how this pulls Christ down?

Ankerberg: *We were also brothers with Satan, too.*

Tanner: *And Lucifer was one of those children. Lucifer and Jesus are the two oldest sons of God. Supposedly they each proposed a plan how to run earth; God chose Jesus' plan of free agency, rejected Lucifer's plan of forced obedience. It started a war in heaven. So two-thirds of those spirit children are the ones that came to earth; one-third fought in the war with Lucifer and got thrown out and became the demonic forces on earth. So, we're all the same species. And this is pulling Christ... well, it's pulling God down to man's level, when you say we are all the same species with the same potential. And so, when Jesus gets chosen as being the savior, it's pulling down his position as God.*

And when he's born of Mary, the Mormons are saying that God's got a physical resurrected body; and they always say that Jesus is "the literal son of the father in the flesh." They always add that phrase on, "literal son of the father in the flesh." Okay, what does that mean to say "the literal son of the father in the flesh?" They're meaning that Heavenly Father had (a physical relationship) with Mary to procreate Jesus.

Now, the average Mormon will say, "That's not true. I haven't heard that." But I can show church statements through the years that are fairly explicit on saying that Jesus' paternity was... he was sired in the same way every son is sired by his father. End quote.

<https://www.jashow.org/articles/what-do-mormons-believe-about-jesus/>

You see, we are talking about cults from a Christian perspective. This is a cult. Who Jesus is, is one of

the key places to determine if a group fits the term 'cult'.

B. What do Mormons believe about the Bible?

Second then, what do Mormons believe about the Bible? Earlier I read to you from a statement by Mormons on what they believe about Jesus. Let me read the second point again, and add one part that I left out earlier. They said:

- We believe the accounts of Jesus' life and ministry recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the New Testament to be historical and truthful. For us the Jesus of history is indeed the Christ of faith. (Then listen to what follows. This is what I left out earlier.) **While we do not believe the Bible to be inerrant, complete or the final word of God, we accept the essential details of the Gospels and more particularly the divine witness of those men who walked and talked with Him or were mentored by His chosen apostles.**

When you believe what has been stated there by the Mormons about the Bible, you can believe about anything else you want to believe or can make believable to others.

A good number of years ago I was teaching an evening Bible class in the high-school in town. And I said, "I have never seen a Bible with the other Mormon books they claim to be divine within the same covers." They have The Book of Mormon, The Pearl of Great Price, and Doctrine and Covenants as divine books alongside the Bible. In the next class one of the students brought just such a book.

CONCL: So, in conclusion, just what is a cult? Well, I distinguish between a cult and an apostatized church. An apostatized church once had the truth, but it has left it. An example is the Roman Catholic Church, or more recently, the United Church. A cult, on the other hand, is any group that bases their teachings on the Bible, but they err on the Person of Jesus Christ or on His finished work in salvation, and or add

to the Scriptures. This makes their teaching a false Gospel. I think that all cults are wrong on their view of who Jesus Christ is. Almost, if not all cults add works as a requirement for salvation. Some add to the Bible, while others use extra biblical books and view them as just as important, or more so than the Bible. It would be worth it for all Christians to think this thought and to get a grasp on what a cult is from a Christian perspective.