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## January 2016 "The Rising Cult"

Dear Friends,

What is a cult? Following is a broad definition of a cult that the Lord gave me quite some time ago: "A cult is any religion that does not fully recognize Jesus for who He is." Cults will always have a sense of religious order and structure and there will be rules, laws or regulations. There will be a concept of submission to a higher authority, but also a denial regarding who Jesus really is; not necessarily a denial of His existence, but of who He is concerning His Deity, salvation and eternal judgment. The reason organizations - small or large - become cults is very simple: they refuse to accept the Bible as God's final word on all matters. The Bible declares:

*For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. (Psalm 119:89)*

*<sup>16</sup>All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: <sup>17</sup>That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

These two passages alone should be enough to convince people that God's Word must be left in context, must be accepted without change and must be the guideline for any and all religious organizations.

Several years ago the Holy Spirit gave me seven indicators that a religious organization (church, group, denomination, etc) is a cult. He did not say that the list excludes other identifying factors, but that these seven are prominent. They are as follows:

- 1) A different, separate or additional way to obtain salvation or go to Heaven other than Jesus.
- 2) Elevating anyone to a position equal to God the Father relative to prayer (someone to whom we pray).
- 3) Declaring other writings to be an addition to or equal with the Bible.
- 4) Ceremonies, services or practices that are closed to open participation.
- 5) A leader or founder declaring that he or she has received new revelation from God, but such revelation cannot be confirmed by scripture.
- 6) Teaching members that certain activities are acceptable, even though the activities are not supported by scripture.
- 7) Demanding partial or complete control over the lives of the members.

With this in mind, consider what Jesus said in Matthew 18:1-10,

*<sup>1</sup>At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*

*<sup>2</sup>And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, <sup>3</sup>And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup>Whosoever therefore shall humble*

*himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>5</sup>And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. <sup>6</sup>But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

To *very briefly* break this passage down, here is what we are reading:

**Verse 1** - The disciples did not ask, "How do we get into the Kingdom of Heaven," they wanted to know who is the greatest in the Kingdom. Because they were Jews, they assumed they were already in the Kingdom.

**Verses 2-3** - Jesus let them know that simply being a Jew did not guarantee they were already in the Kingdom. He told them that unless they are converted (or, born again) and become as little children (or, babes in Christ) they would not be in the Kingdom.

**Verse 4** - Jesus further explained that when a person accepts Him as Savior and becomes part of the Kingdom (Colossians 1:13-14), God does not value one person over another, seeing all of His children as being the greatest.

**Verse 5** - Whoso (every person, church, religious organization of any kind) welcomes new converts (and really, any Believer) into their group, telling them, "We will teach you more about Jesus and God," is also receiving Jesus into their midst.

**Verse 6** - But whoso offends a convert who has put faith in Jesus for salvation is in severe trouble. Jesus says it would have been better for those who offend to have died before having the chance to do the offending.

Who are the people doing the offending in verse 6? People, churches, ministries and religious organizations who have received Christians "in the name of Jesus." What, then, is the offense being committed? This is where it gets very interesting.

Notice in verse 6 the words used are "shall offend," and not simply "offend." The phrase "shall offend," comes from the Greek word "skandalizo." Its base definition is: *A trap, stumbling block. To cause to stumble and fall.* In this verse, skandalizo is used in what some refer to as the "causative sense," which means an action (on the part of an individual or group of people) that is a stumbling block and is the cause for another person to be led astray, led into sin, fall away from truth or to exercise a liberty against his conscience. Skandalizo in this passage is not speaking of a one-time event, but rather an on-going process or series of events.

The people being offended are described by Jesus in verse 6 as "little ones." But notice in verse 3 that Jesus said people need to be converted and become as "little children." The phrase "little children" comes from the Greek word "paidion" and part of its meaning is, "recently born; a baby." But the phrase "little ones" comes from an entirely different Greek word, "mikros," which means, "young; not grown up." Therefore, the "little ones" Jesus is speaking of in verse 6 are not just the new converts, but also any Christian who is not spiritually mature enough to discern the skandalizo and guard against its effects.

Remember, a skandalizo is a stumbling block that is the cause for a Christian to be led astray, led into sin, fall away from truth or to exercise a liberty against his conscience. A key in this is the word "led." Many Christians have acted in a way that is rude, uncaring, mean and downright caustic to the point that they "push" other Christians away. But in order to lead people, you must first gain their trust and convince them you have their best interests at heart. Once you have gained their confidence, you can then lead them in almost any direction. This is especially true in churches: once you have convinced people you are helping them live in the freedom of their salvation, you can lead them into almost anything...just keep associating some scripture and the name of Jesus with what you are teaching.

All this brings me to the focus of this letter: The Holy Spirit showed me that a major cult is rising within the Body of Christ. He revealed this to me as I was reading Matthew chapter 18, reminding me of the seven signs of a cult. Though this rising cult appears to have no singular leader, the truth is that its leader is Satan.

Those who stand behind a pulpit are charged by God to deliver truth. People trust their church leaders, anticipating that what is taught is scriptural. However, many of these leaders are teaching a skandalizo doctrine that is leading huge numbers of "little ones" away from the foundational truths of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:19-22). Here are some examples of how this cult is rising within the Church.

#### **A DIFFERENT, SEPARATE OR ADDITIONAL WAY TO OBTAIN SALVATION OR GO TO HEAVEN OTHER THAN JESUS.**

More and more reports are coming out about preachers and churches declaring that "we are all serving and worshiping the same God, even if you call Him Mohammed, Buddha, etc." Some are combining **THE** Bible with Islam's "bible," the Koran, in their teachings, commonly referred to as "Chrislam." However, God has not changed His Word or His standard for salvation:

*<sup>9</sup>Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: <sup>10</sup>That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; <sup>11</sup>And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)*

*<sup>9</sup>That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. <sup>10</sup>For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)*

*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)*

#### **ELEVATING ANYONE TO A POSITION EQUAL TO GOD RELATIVE TO PRAYER (SOMEONE TO WHOM WE PRAY).**

The moment you declare that there is one God, but He goes by several different names, is the moment you have given a stamp of approval for people to pray to anyone.

**A LEADER OR FOUNDER DECLARING THAT HE OR SHE HAS RECEIVED NEW REVELATION FROM GOD, BUT SUCH REVELATION CANNOT BE CONFIRMED BY SCRIPTURE.**

I could probably write several letters about this one. For example, over and over, preachers are declaring that they have received a new revelation of grace. Some indicate that Paul and Peter received differing teachings about grace. This is absolutely preposterous! There is no way in all of eternity that the Holy Spirit is going to give different people conflicting doctrines, and He is not going to give anyone something that contradicts what Jesus taught.

Many are teaching that, as Christians, grace precludes the need for repentance of sins and that the blood of Jesus has cleansed us from all past, present and future sins. Further, they declare that there is nothing in scripture instructing Believers to repent when they sin. But I want you to know that scripture has more than one occurrence of Christians being instructed to repent when they sin. Telling Christians there is no need to repent is essentially telling them there is no accountability for how they live.

Let me make this very clear: there is no such thing as "new revelation" when it opposes the contextual use of God's Holy Word. Any such "new revelation" is nothing more than old fashioned lies and deception originating from seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.

**TEACHING MEMBERS THAT CERTAIN ACTIVITIES ARE ACCEPTABLE, EVEN THOUGH THE ACTIVITIES ARE NOT SUPPORTED BY SCRIPTURE.**

More than one report has come out about churches holding services in bars with alcohol being served. One after another, pastors, churches and denominations are giving approval for sexual behavior that God calls an abomination. Perversions are creeping into church services; some are now approving of congregations worshiping while totally naked (does anyone remember what happened in Exodus 32?). Pre- and extra-marital sexual behavior is not confronted. We are witnessing the corruption depicted in Ezekiel 22:26, *Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.*

**IS THERE A SOLUTION?**

Christians by the tens of thousands have joined this cult so they can break free from the "bondage" of genuine holiness. Churches have affiliated with it, even though the name on the sign has not changed. Criticism and accusations of legalism are cast in the direction of Believers and churches which refuse to compromise. Technically, there is no solution. You see, God revealed this falling away was going to take place (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 1 Timothy 4:1-2, 2 Timothy 4:3-3-4) so we cannot prevent its happening. Thus, there are some Christians who are going to be permanently deceived, just as Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24.

Everyone - even the very elect (Matthew 24:24) - is susceptible to the deception of this cult. God has established Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers in His Church for the purpose of declaring His truth. However, spiritual growth and maturity is the sole responsibility of each individual Christian. It is up to me and no one else to see to it that I spend time in scripture and pray in the Spirit to guard myself against deception.

If you are part of a church that has aligned itself with the teachings of this cult, you need to distance yourself from it ASAP. In 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, God has warned Christians that light cannot have fellowship with darkness and that we are to come out from among those who compromise His holy standards. We cannot fix people or force them to change their doctrine; we are to live as Christ, pray for the deceived and declare truth without concession.

In the days to come we are going to see this cult expand its influence and corruption of truth. But be encouraged to know that if we build our lives on truth (Matthew 7:24-27) and make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10-12) we will weather the storm of deception and never fall!

In His Grace,  
Jim

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