

What Is a Cult

by Ron Carlson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being aware of the dangers of cults and false prophets, and of being grounded in the word of God in order to protect ourselves from spiritual deception.

Duration: 56:26

Scripture: Malachi 3:6, Matthew 24:3-4, 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 2 Corinthians 11:13-14, Hebrews 6:17-18

Topics: "Cults"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the warning given by Jesus about the increase of false Christs and false prophets in the end times. He emphasizes the importance of preaching the word of God and warns against being misled by those claiming to be the Christ. The preacher highlights the significance of the Bible as the ultimate source of truth and authority, even if it contradicts personal beliefs. He also mentions the influence of Eastern philosophy and techniques in leading people astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Jesus Christ.

Transcript

The title of this message is, The Jesus of the Cults, and is given by Ron Carlson. We begin our study this evening of the non-Christian cults. And each session this week, both morning and evening, we'll be dealing with a different subject.

Tomorrow morning we'll be dealing with spiritualism, UFOs, and the occult. And then tomorrow night, Jehovah's Witnesses and the Trinity. Now, we are following Peter's admonition in 1 Peter 3, verse 15, where he tells us that as Christians, we are to be ready always to give to every man an answer, a reason for the hope that lies within us.

And Jude, verse 3, tells us that we are to contend earnestly for the faith, which has been delivered once for all time unto the saints. Now, a lot of people ask me, how did you get involved in lecturing and research on the non-Christian cults? I got involved in this ministry out of my own frustration and ignorance. Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons or others would come to my front door, and in my own ignorance, I wasn't sure what they believed.

I knew what I believed, but oftentimes wasn't sure why I believed it. And in my own ignorance, I would become frustrated and have to shut the door on their face, never being able to give an answer for my faith. Perhaps you've had that same experience.

So we want this week to be a very practical week for you, as we contend earnestly for the faith, and learn how we can share our faith with other people. We are not here to attack or tear down any individuals. I have no qualms with individuals who are involved in the cults, but it is with the theology and teachings of these cults, which we do have a quarrel with, when they claim that they alone speak for God, that they alone are the truth, then the Christian Church must speak up.

We encourage you to bring your Bibles each evening and in the mornings, because we have found that a Jehovah's Witness, for example, can turn the average Christian into a doctrinal pretzel in about 20 minutes, and he'll do it using your own Bible. So we need to ground ourselves in God's word. If you have your Bibles, turn with me to Matthew 24.

Matthew 24, beginning with verse 3. And here the disciples came to Jesus on the Mount of Olives, and they asked him a question which is on the minds of many people today. And as he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age? A lot of people are asking that question today. How are we to know when Jesus Christ is going to return? What are going to be the signs of the second coming? Now, I want you to look at what Jesus answered.

It's very interesting. Verse 4. And Jesus answered and said to them, See to it that no one misleads you, for many will come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and will mislead many. Verse 11.

And many false prophets will also arise, and will mislead many. Verse 23. Four times in his Olivet discourse, Jesus warned us concerning the end times, that there is going to be an increase in false Christs and false prophets.

We are seeing this today as never before. Turn with me to 2 Timothy 4. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word of God. Be ready in season and out of season.

Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time is coming when men will not endure sound doctrine. For wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires.

And they will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. We are seeing this on an unprecedented scale today. 150 years ago, in America, there were less than 1,000 cultists.

It is estimated that in the United States now, there are over 25 million people involved in one of the non-Christian cults. It is estimated that there are over 5,000 different cults in this country, all claiming to be the truth, all claiming to be the way, that they alone speak for God. Everybody else is wrong.

As Christians, we need to be deeply concerned about this, and know how to speak in regards to these things. Turn over with me to 1 Timothy 4. But the Spirit explicitly says that in the latter times, some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and the doctrine of demons. Not only are we seeing a turning away from sound doctrine to every type of aberration, but we are seeing an increase in people following the doctrine of demons and deceitful spirits.

It is estimated that in the United States, there are over 50 million Americans involved in some form of the occult, whether it be fortune-telling, astrology, tarot cards, witchcraft, Satanism, spiritualism, seance, mediums, Ouija boards. Over 50 million Americans combined in some form of the occult. Tomorrow

morning at 11 o'clock, we're going to be dealing specifically with the whole world of the occult, and what does God say concerning these things.

But tonight we want to specialize in the area of the cults. Now, Jesus said, and throughout the New Testament we read, that in the last days are going to come false Christs and false prophets. Now you may be asking yourself, if they are coming, how are we to detect? Or how are we to know the counterfeit from the real thing? Well, if you turn with me to Matthew 7, Jesus gives us some insight into who the false prophet will be.

Matthew 7, beginning with verse 15. Jesus said, Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits.

Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but the rotten tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

So then you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles? And then I will declare to them, Jesus said, I never knew you.

Depart from me, you who practice unrighteousness. Now Jesus said there are coming false prophets. They're going to preach in his name.

They're even going to perform miracles in the name of Jesus Christ. He says many will call him Lord, but at the judgment day he will tell them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you who practice unrighteousness.

Now if there are coming these false prophets who are going to call Jesus Lord and preach in his name and perform miracles in his name, how are we to detect the false prophet from the real prophet of God? Well, verse 15. First of all, Jesus tells us that the false prophet is going to come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly he will be a ravenous wolf. It's interesting that throughout the New Testament, Jesus always used sheep as a description of the church.

He said the false prophet is going to come looking like one of you. He's going to look like a Christian. He's going to sound like a Christian.

He'll use all the Christian terminology. But Jesus said inwardly he will be a ravenous wolf who will seek to destroy you. How will you know him? Jesus said you will know them by their fruits.

Now some people say, well, wait a minute, Ron. I know Jehovah's Witnesses or have Mormon neighbors or Christian science people. And if you say you know them by their fruits, well, they must be Christian because they live very ethical and moral lives.

But you must understand there are two types of fruits spoken of in the Bible. One is the fruit of your life, but the other is the fruit of your teaching, the fruit of your doctrine. And you must put the two together.

Jesus said many people call him Lord, but you must test them by the fruit of what they teach. And throughout Scripture we are admonished in 1 Thessalonians 5.21 to test all things, hold fast to that which

is true and good. Ephesians 6 tells us to test all things by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Hebrews 4 says it's sharper than any two-edged sword, testing all things, dividing asunder. That the word of God must be our authority. And testing the false prophets and their teaching.

Now you may be asking at this point, well, what exactly is a cult? What do you mean when you talk about a non-Christian cult? When dealing with the cults, we actually have four categories that we deal with. The first category of cults are those organizations which we have classically defined as a cult. Over the last 50 years, the classical definition of a non-Christian cult has simply been this.

It has been a group of people gathered around somebody's interpretation of the Bible. They claim to be in harmony with the Bible, and yet they claim some new revelation or teaching through which they interpret the Bible. And they end up denying the very basic doctrines of historic Orthodox Christianity.

Now they all use Christian terminology. This is one of the things you must understand in dealing with the cults. They will sound very Christian.

And if you're taking notes, point one is you must understand that they have redefined the terms. You can ask a Jehovah's Witness, do you believe in Jesus Christ? And he'll say, absolutely yes. And you can ask a Mormon, do you believe in Jesus Christ? And he'll say, absolutely yes.

You can ask a follower of Armstrong, do you believe in Jesus Christ? He'll say, absolutely yes. You can ask a Christian scientist, do you believe in Jesus Christ? He'll say, absolutely yes. But as we're going to see in a moment, they have redefined the terms.

We'll look at that in a moment. But secondly, in this category, you must understand that they have added a new revelation through which they interpret the Bible. For example, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society founded by Charles Taze Russell and Judge Rutherford claim that they alone are the prophet of God, that everybody else is satanic, all other churches are wrong, they alone speak for Jehovah, they alone have the truth, everybody else is wrong.

We'll look at that tomorrow night. We have the Mormons founded by Joseph Smith, Jr., who says in 1820 there appeared to him a messenger from heaven who told him that he was to restore the true church of Jesus Christ that had been lost for 1,800 years, that he alone was the prophet of God, that he alone has the truth, everybody else is wrong. Mary Baker Eddy in 1879 says that she now has a higher, clearer, more perfect revelation than that given 1,900 years ago, that through science and health, the key to the scriptures, she alone is able to accurately know all things.

We have Herbert W. Armstrong, founder of the Worldwide Church of God, ambassador of college in plain truth, we'll look at Friday morning. He says in 1934 a messenger from heaven appeared to him, told him all churches were wrong, that he was to restore the true gospel that had been lost for 1,900 years. We have Sun Yung Moon, we'll look at another morning, Tuesday morning.

He says in 1936 sitting on a hillside in North Korea, a messenger from heaven appeared to him and told him that he was to complete the unfinished task of salvation. He alone has the truth, everybody else is wrong. As you go through this category, you discover they claim some new revelation, higher revelation over the Bible.

Now we wanna get back to this category specifically tonight, but let's just briefly look at the three other categories that have developed over the last five to 10 years. Because of the huge influx of Eastern thinking philosophy gurus into this country, we've expanded our definition of what a cult is. The second category is what we call the Oriental cults.

Their basis is in Indian philosophy and that is what I studied at the University of California working on my master's degree there in Indian philosophy. You discover that they all have one common characteristic. All the Oriental cults deny a personal God.

They teach rather that we are part of an impersonal cosmos. That is their definition for God, that God is a state of impersonal nothingness. Everything in the universe is part of this.

All of the Oriental cults teach, as does Indian philosophy and Hinduism, that the reason you suffer in life, the reason people suffer in life is because they think they are personal beings. This is an illusion, it's not real. And so they teach you must tear down your mind and personality, get rid of your senses, get rid of thinking and feeling.

This holds you bound to this world of illusion called maya and you must transcend out of this world to a state of impersonal nothingness. Now this is hard to understand in our Western society, but this is basic Eastern philosophy. And in order to transcend out of this world, they developed a variety of techniques such as yoga, which Patanjali systematized in 200 B.C. We'll look at that when we deal with TM.

They developed Zen out of Buddhism. They developed transcendental meditation of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. And if you go into these organizations, they will all teach you a philosophy and technique for tearing down the physical, personal level of existence so that you might transcend to a state of impersonal nothingness where they say you will have peace.

For example, in this category, we have the Divine Light Mission headed by Maharaji Ji, the 19-year-old boy guru, little pudgy guy, who two years ago in the Houston Astrodome, they proclaimed God Incarnate, Lord of the Universe. Now that was interesting to me because a week after they proclaimed him Lord of the Universe, God Incarnate, he was in a hospital in Houston with ulcers. Like I told somebody recently, I always had problems with a God who had ulcers.

But this is Maharaji Ji. And if you go into the Divine Light Mission, they will teach you how to transcend. They will teach you how to focus upon the Divine Light, the third eye in your forehead.

They will teach you how to press in upon your ears so that you might hear the divine sound. They will teach you how to reach your tongue back into your throat so that you might taste the divine nectar. Nobody's told them yet.

It's post-nasal drip. If you go into the Hare Krishna movement, known as the Krishna consciousness movement, the Hare Krishnas who used to wear their orange saffron robes, bald head and pigtail, chanting on the street corners, raising funds, they've now become more sophisticated and wear wigs and dress in regular clothing so that they might be more deceptive in their fundraising in airports throughout this country. I was speaking recently down in Santa Barbara, California, and walking down State Street there, the main street, there were a group of Hare Krishna fellows standing on the street corners with their orange saffron robes, bald head, pigtail.

They had their tom-toms and they were chanting the Maha Mantra, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Hare Hare, Krishna Krishna, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, over and over and over again. So I walked up behind both of them and I put my arms around both of them and I said, Do you guys know that Jesus Christ loves you? Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Hare Rama, Hare Rama. I said, No, Jesus Christ once set you free.

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. I said, Tell me something. I said, What will Krishna do for me? Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Hare Rama.

I said, I know that. I said, What will Krishna do for me? They said, Well, what you have to do is chant this over and over again the rest of your life. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Hare Rama.

I said, I know that. I said, What will Krishna do for me? Then their eyes got big and they said, Well, what you do is you chant this over and over again the rest of your life and then one day, one day you'll evolve into the great nothing. I went, Whoopee.

Rather evolve into the great pumpkin or something. But their whole goal in life was to evolve into the great nothing, to tear down this physical, personal level of existence which is seen as an illusion, not real, and merge with the impersonal. But my friends, an impersonal cosmos never loved or cared about anybody.

It breaks my heart as I see young people going into these Eastern cults. The answer of life is not there. And because they have not found the answer in the Oriental cults, many people are now going into the consciousness cults or the human potential movements, such things as Scientology by L. Ron Hubbard, A. S. Earhart seminar training, Warner Earhart, Erika, Transcendental Meditation.

The consciousness cults are seeking to combine Eastern philosophy with Western psychology, teaching that man is the apex, the zenith of evolution, that he has been in a process of evolving physically. He must now evolve mentally and spiritually. All of the consciousness cults have one thing in common, several things.

They all deny a personal creator. They all deny a personal God. Rather they teach that man is in the process of evolution and man must become God himself.

And the ultimate goal of all consciousness cults, human potential movements, is self-worship, for you to realize your own divinity. L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of Scientology, in 1950 published a book called Dianetics, Science of the Mind. L. Ron Hubbard was a science fiction writer back in the 30s and 40s.

He told a man, a friend of his, he said, if you want to make money, start your own religion. So he wrote Dianetics, half truth, half a farce, but people took him seriously, so he started the Church of Scientology. And he now teaches that you can come and be counseled through the Church of Scientology, that people are filled with what he calls egrams, engrams, deeds done in past lives through reincarnation that you must work off.

And through their counseling sessions they will seek to achieve what is known as a state of clear, that you might achieve your own divinity. And L. Ron Hubbard says, when you realize that you are God, worship yourself and you'll be at peace. For this process they will charge you anywhere between \$2,000 and \$40,000 to reach your own divinity.

Paul talks about the lie of the ages in Romans 1, verses 22 and 23. He says, professing to be wise, they have become fools, for they exchange the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man. Verse 25 says, they have worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever.

It's a lie of the ages. Satan came to Adam and Eve in the garden. They said, ah, eat of the fruit.

You can be God yourself. Satan is still perpetrating the same lie through a lot of cults today. The people did not find satisfaction with their own divinity, so many people have gone into the fourth category, which is known as the occult or spiritualistic cults, people who are seeking to make contact with other dimensional beings outside of our three-dimensional world of time and space, seeking to make contact with the dead or the spirit world, seeking to gain wisdom, knowledge, and power from some source other than God.

Tomorrow morning we'll be looking specifically at this area, such things as spiritism, Ike and Carr, Edgar Cayce, his Association for Research and Enlightenment, we have astrology, seances, mediums, Uri Geller, the Israeli psychic we'll talk about, Baba Ramdas, UFO cults. Don't miss tomorrow morning. We want to deal specifically this evening with this first category of cults, that is the American cults, those which have their origin here in America, which claim to be in harmony with the Bible, but yet add some new revelation through which they interpret the Bible.

How are we to test these cults? When someone comes along and says that they have a new revelation from God, Joseph Smith, Jr. of the Mormons says that he received a new and higher revelation from God. Mary Baker Eddy said that she now has a higher, clearer, more perfect revelation than that given 1900 years before. Sun Myung Moon of the Unification Church says in 1936, Christ revealed to him a new revelation.

If someone claims to have a new revelation, how are we to know whether that revelation is from God or not? This must be our methodology in dealing with the cults. The cults claim that the same God who has given us the Bible has also given us their revelation. For example, Joseph Smith, Jr. claims that the same God who gave us the Bible has also given us Mormon revelation.

How do we know whether this revelation is from God or not? We even have a lot of people in Christian churches today who are going around claiming to have a vision from God, claiming to have a revelation from God, having a prophecy from God. How are we to know whether those are from God or not? It's very simple. God has already told us in Malachi 3.6 that he is immutable, he does not change.

Hebrews 6.17 and 18 tells us that he does not lie, he is consistent in truth, he will never contradict himself. God will never communicate one truth to one generation and another truth to another generation. He will always be consistent in truth, he will never contradict himself.

He's already told us that. He is immutable, he does not change. Therefore, we must test all younger revelations by God's earliest revelation in the Bible to see if they are consistent and in harmony.

If we find that the younger revelation is consistent with God's earliest revelation, then there's no problem. But if we find that it contradicts at any point, then we must throw out the younger revelation and hold fast to God's oldest revelation because God does not change, he is consistent in truth, he will never contradict himself. In dealing with the cults, this must be our basis of authority in our methodology.

If you use any other methodology in dealing with the cults, you will find yourself caught up in a morass of experience and terminology and you'll go nowhere. You must test all things by God's word, the Bible. It must be your authority.

The word is sharper than any two-edged sword. We must test all things by it, as 1 Thessalonians 5 says. Ephesians 6 tells us that the word of God is the sword of the spirit.

The sword of the spirit is not your vision, it's not your revelation, it's not an experience. The sword of the spirit is the word of God, and that is what we must test all things by. Now let me give you an illustration of why this must be our methodology.

When I was growing up, I always wanted to be a pilot, and so one summer when I was 16, I had been working through junior high and high school in a hamburger joint or a restaurant down in Long Beach, cooking hamburgers. And I finally earned enough money to take all my flying lessons one summer in three months. So when I was 16, I took all my lessons, and on my 17th birthday, I was old enough to get a pilot's license.

Now to get a pilot's license is very much like going for a driver's exam. The examiner sat in the cockpit of the plane next to me, and he asked me to take the plane up to 5,000 feet and do a variety of maneuvers. One of the maneuvers that he asked me to do that day is what is known as a graveyard spiral.

Now a graveyard spiral is this. You're flying along at 5,000 feet, and you begin to pull back on the wheel of the plane. Now as you pull back on the wheel of the plane, the nose of the plane will go straight up in the air, and when the nose of the plane gets straight up in the air, something happens to the plane.

It stops. And when a plane is stopped 5,000 feet up in the air, there's only one way to go, and that's not up. You pull the plane into a stall, it stops, and then you turn the plane over on its back, and you begin to fall backwards down towards Earth, spinning around in circle.

Now if you think the Colossus in Magic Mountain is something, you should try a graveyard spiral. As you're upside down, falling down backwards, spinning around in circle, something begins to happen to you inside. The first time I ever did it, I threw up all over downtown Los Angeles.

But when you go up with the examiner, there's something even more exciting than that. When I went up with the examiner, he first asked me to put on the hood. Now a hood is a visor that comes down over your eyes, and on both sides, so you cannot see outside the plane.

The only thing you can see are those instruments, those gauges in front of you. And then with this hood on, this visor, the examiner said, now go into a graveyard spiral. Now you see, they call it that for a reason.

If you do it wrong, folks, that's where you end up. But with this hood on, this visor, not being able to see outside the plane, I began to pull back on the wheel of the plane. I could feel myself going back in the seat as the nose of the plane went straight up, it stalled and stopped.

I turned the plane over on its back and began to fall backwards down towards her, spinning around in circles. Now as you're spinning towards her, something begins to happen to you inside, beside your stomach. All of a sudden, your equilibrium, your sense of balance, your emotions go haywire.

And the plane will be spinning right, but because your equilibrium is so upset, your mind will tell you that the plane is turning left, when in reality it's turning right. And so if a person was to rely on his own mind and emotions to try and get out of a graveyard spiral, he would think he was turning left, so he would compensate by turning right, but the plane is already going right, you would go into a worse spin and you would crash. And there is only one way that a person can survive a graveyard spiral, and that is to look at those instruments, and to look at those gauges, and to obey what they are saying, even though it may be different and contrary to how you think and feel, because those gauges tell you the truth, and they do not lie, and you have to obey them.

And my friends, our world today is in a graveyard spiral, and there's a lot of people's lives, maybe someone here tonight, whose lives are in a graveyard spiral and they're heading for a collision. We have a lot of people relying on their own mind and emotions trying to pull themselves out of it, but all you have to do is look at the last several thousand years of history to see that the graveyard spiral continues to get worse. And the day is never before we desperately need some instrument, some gauge that will tell us the truth.

My friends, you can study all the religions, all the philosophies, all the economic and political theory you want. There's only one instrument, one gauge that will tell you the truth, and that's God's Word, the Bible. Not only does God tell us how we got into this graveyard spiral, but he tells us how we can get out of it, and we must obey it because it's God's truth.

Even though it may be different than how you think and feel, it's God's truth. And that is why it must be our basis of authority by which we test all things. Now, why must this be our methodology? Well, turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and you'll see why.

2 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 3 and 4, Paul says, I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion which is in Jesus Christ. Now, you might underline that word minds. Paul here is writing to Christians, and he says, I am afraid, lest your minds be led astray.

How? Verse 4, for if one comes and preaches another Jesus. You might underline that there is another Jesus. Whom we have preached or you receive a different spirit.

You might underline that there is another spirit. Or you receive a different gospel. You might underline that there is a counterfeit gospel.

I am afraid, lest you accept these. Now look at verse 13. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

There we see that identification again. Disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

Paul says, I am afraid, lest your minds be led astray, because there is coming another Jesus, another gospel, another spirit. It is interesting that 78% of those who are in the cults today came out of mainline Christian denominations. Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Methodists.

Their minds were led astray by another Jesus, another gospel, another spirit. Now you may be saying, well I thought there was only one Jesus Christ. No, there is literally a smorgasbord of Jesus Christ being offered to the public today.

Who is the Jesus of the cults? Let me just give you a brief rundown. Witnesses, they teach that he is the Archangel Michael, the first and highest creation of God, who came to earth as a man, who died and rose as an invisible ghost, and came back invisibly in 1918 to Brooklyn, New York to head up the Watchtower organization. I kid you not, that is the Jesus of the Watchtower.

The Mormons teach that Jesus is simply a man who has evolved to become a God. He is simply one God in a whole pantheon of gods. They teach that Jesus is the brother of Satan, that he was a polygamist married to the two Marys and Martha, and that the blood of Jesus Christ cannot cleanse all sin.

And the list goes on and on. The Jesus of the Christian scientists, of Mary Baker Eddy, she taught that Jesus Christ was simply a divine idea. The Jesus of Garner Ted Armstrong and Herbert, his father, is that Jesus was the first man to self-perfect himself, and that he is now our example as to how we must perfect ourselves that we might hopefully achieve salvation.

The Jesus of Sun Myung Moon is a man who failed, and Sun Myung Moon is the second coming of Jesus Christ. The Jesus of the Baha'is is simply one of nine great world manifestations. The Jesus of the Unitarians, they teach that he was an extraordinarily good man who his followers mistakenly deified.

The Jesus of the Spiritists is an advanced medium in the sixth sphere of the astral projection, wherever that is. The Jesus of Unity is a man who perfected the divine ideal which we all have within ourselves. He simply perfected it better than anyone else.

The Jesus of the Rosicrucians is a manifestation of cosmic consciousness. The Jesus of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and TM is an enlightened guru who never suffered or died for anybody. And the list goes on and on and on.

The Jesus of the cults, my friend, is not the Jesus of the Bible. There is another Jesus, a counterfeit. There is one word which separates us from non-Christian cults.

That word is Christology, the person and work of Jesus Christ. And the greatest question still today is, what think ye of Christ? Who is he? Now, if there are coming these counterfeit Jesus Christ and counterfeit gospels, how are we to know the real from the counterfeit? I had a friend who was telling me, he worked in Washington, how the Treasury Department there teaches bankers and tellers to detect counterfeit money. I said to him, what do they do, show them all types of counterfeit? He says, no.

He says, it's very interesting. He says, what they do is they'll put bankers in a vault for one week with nothing but freshly minted one dollar bills. And he says, for one week they will handle nothing but real money.

They'll handle it, they'll touch it, they'll feel it, they'll smell it, they'll look at it, taste it. Well, I don't know if they'll taste it, but for one week they'll do nothing but handle the real thing. He says, after one week of that, as soon as a counterfeit simply comes across their fingertips, they are able to detect it immediately because they know the real thing so well.

It is our purpose this week not to make you all experts in the cause, but that we might come to know the real thing so well that no matter what counterfeit comes across our path, we will be able to detect it immediately. The question we want to ask tonight is, who is the real Jesus Christ? Turn with me to 1 John 4. Verses 1 to 3. 1 John 4. John says, Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know

the Spirit of God.

Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the Antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming and now is already in the world.

John says there are coming false spirits and false prophets. Test them. Do they confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh? If they do not, they are of Antichrist.

There are many cults which believe that Jesus was in the flesh, but John had already recorded for us in his gospel who this unique one was who was coming in the flesh. Turn back with me to John's gospel, chapter 1. We see who this unique one was who was coming in the flesh. 1 John 1. Verse 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Look at verse 14. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. John did not want there to be any mistake here as to who he was speaking about.

He sets out for us here a beautiful logical syllogism so that there would be no mistake. Verse 1 he says the Word was God. Verse 14 he tells us the Word became flesh.

Think with me for a moment. If the Word was God and the Word became flesh, who became flesh? John is recording for us that God took on human flesh. God incarnate.

And in his epistle he says test the prophets. Do they confess that Jesus Christ is the eternal God come in human flesh? If they deny that, they are of antichrist. If you're taking notes, write it down.

There is one distinguishing mark of every non-Christian cult. They all deny that Jesus Christ is God come in human flesh. They all deny it.

They all have another Jesus, a counterfeit. Tomorrow night we're going to go into detail concerning this when we deal with Jehovah's Witnesses and their denial of the Trinity and the Deity of Christ. Don't miss tomorrow night.

Come early. Because it will be a very interesting time together. But also the cults, as we conclude, all have another gospel.

They all teach us salvation of works as we're going to see. You must earn and work for your salvation through their particular organization or teaching. If you turn with me to John chapter 6. They asked Jesus this question which many people are asking today.

Verse 28 and 29. They said therefore to Jesus, what shall we do that we may work the works of God? What should we do to work the works of God? Now look at what Jesus answered. Verse 29.

Jesus answered and said to them, this is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent. Jesus said if you want to do the work of God, the greatest work you can do is to believe in the one whom the father has sent. Ephesians 2.8 and 9 tells us, for by God's grace are we saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

And that not of ourselves, it is a free gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. You cannot earn your salvation, you cannot work for it.

As we go further this week, you'll see this clearly taught as we go through scripture. That salvation is by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. What he did on Calvary's cross through the shedding of his blood and his resurrection.

Through him we can have life, not only now, but for eternity. And John writes in 1 John 5, 11 through 13, he says, these things have I written unto you, that he that has a son has life. And he says I have written this to you that you might know.

He says I don't want you to hope or guess about it. He says I want you to know, he that has a son has life. My friends, if you don't know Jesus Christ, if you've been going through life hoping and guessing about your salvation, the Bible says you can know.

He that has a son has life. We'll be dealing with this this week. And we are, I'm excited about this week as we go into the study of God's word.

Tomorrow morning, the occult. Tomorrow night, Jehovah's Witnesses. Tuesday morning, Some Young Moon.

Tuesday night, Transcendental Meditation. Wednesday morning, Christian Meditation versus Zen, Yoga, and TM. Wednesday night, the Sinai slides of the adventure I told you about this morning.

Thursday morning, the Bible, God's word, how do we know it's the word of God? Thursday night, Mormonism. Is it occult or Christian? Friday morning, Herbert and Garner, Ted Armstrong, do they have the plain truth? Friday night, secular humanism and evolution. Don't miss any sessions.

We're going to have a great time. Now what we usually do when we have sessions in churches, and what I'm involved in throughout the year is not only research, but lecturing in churches, holding seminars, usually Sunday through Wednesday, five sessions, in churches around the country. Your church might be interested in something like this, and you can talk to me, we have brochures about this.

We usually open it up for questions and answers after the time for a few minutes, and we may want to do that this evening just for a couple minutes, it's not quite nine o'clock. So if you have any questions concerning any of the things we said tonight or any cults which we will not deal with specifically this week, we just take a few minutes to answer those questions. I made the statement, he's asking a question concerning what about 78% of those who are in the cults having come out of mainline Christian denominations.

We have seen across this country that many of the mainline denominations are no longer teaching the word of God, and they have fallen into teaching rather liberal theology, men's ideas, and they have not grounded their people in God's word, and they are easy prey for the cults. For example, it's interesting that 50%, over 50%, almost 60% of Jehovah's Witnesses are former Roman Catholics, and Roman Catholics traditionally were not encouraged to read the Bible, and so someone comes to their front door and shows them a text out of context, it becomes a pretext for their own theology, and they are easily led astray, not understanding the word of God. And this is why it's so important, and I encourage these churches, to ground your people in God's word.

It is the sword of the spirit by which we test all things, and this just has not been done across this country in many churches today, and that's why people have been easy prey for the cults. That's a good question concerning the local church founded by Witness Lee. I was able to have a personal interview with Witness

Lee for three hours last summer, one of the few I know of who's been able to spend time with him, discussing his theology and his teaching, and Witness Lee, who came to the United States in 1960, he had been a follower of Watchman Nee in China, and in China they taught certain teachings for cultural reasons.

Watchman Nee taught that you shouldn't meet in church buildings, you must meet in people's homes and parks, etc., for a cultural reason, they were under persecution. Witness Lee, when he went to Taiwan and then in 1960 came to America, began to teach that all denominations were wrong, all church buildings were wrong, all churches are wrong, that they were of Satan, and that you should alone be the church or the local church. It's interesting to me that for the last 20 years he's been condemning all denominations and church buildings.

Two years ago I was at their dedication for their new church building and administration offices in Anaheim, California. I said to Witness Lee, I said, don't you realize what you're doing? The exact thing you've been condemning for 20 years you're now doing? For 20 years you've been condemning church buildings, now you've built a huge edifice. You've been condemning denominations, now you've established your own denomination, the local church.

He says, well, we're not a denomination. He said, this isn't a church. I said, well, what is it? He says, well, it's simply a local meeting hall.

He says, all denominations are wrong. He says, why should people have denominations? Why can't they just be the church? I said, do you have any qualms with the Baptists down the street here, the Presbyterians? He said, well, why do they have to call themselves that? Why can't they just come over to our place and just be the church? You see this throughout all the cults. They establish an exclusiveness that they alone have the truth.

Another characteristic you see in all the cults is they establish their own translation of the scriptures. As you may know, Witness Lee has done his own translation of the Bible called the Recovery Version. They claim many things for Witness Lee.

Witness Lee admitted to me, though, that he has never had a day of Greek in his life. He has never had a course in Hebrew. He does not know any Greek or Hebrew or other original languages.

He admitted to me that he has never had any seminary training. He has never had any Bible school training. He has no theological training at all.

Yet he has developed his own theology, and then he developed his own translation to go along with that. You find that the local church has a variety of aberrations in their teaching. Beginning with their doctrine of God, they teach a very ancient heresy which was called monarchical modalism in denying the Trinity, teaching that there is only God the Father, and Jesus Christ is God the Father, and the Holy Spirit is God the Father.

This was condemned by the early church. He has aberrations in his doctrine of the church as well as his doctrine of man. We won't go into all of that.

But you find that if you go to their meetings, you'll find that many young people who are in the local church are Christians. I don't question that there are many Christians in the local church. The problem is this, that they go into the local church and they hear witness-laid teaching and hear all the Christian terminology,

and they interpret it out of their upbringing in a Bible-teaching church.

They do not understand that Witness Lee has redefined the terms. Many of the biblical terms he used, he has redefined them to suit his own theology. When we go into Christian meditation on Wednesday morning, we'll be dealing with what goes on in the local church's meetings.

They have what they call prayer reading, where they have chanting, cheerleading, where they begin to sing louder and louder, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, until they achieve a state of hyperventilation, and they keep doing that until they achieve what is known as an oxygen rush, which intensifies this emotional subjective experience, and then they say that that is praying in the Spirit or diving into the Spirit. Well, my friends, that is totally unbiblical. Nowhere in Scripture will you find that type of activity.

When we deal with that Wednesday morning, we'll go into detail concerning that type of prayer and that type of chanting. Nowhere in Scripture do you find that, and certainly not praying in the Spirit. There are many Christians in the local church, but I believe they're in there because they do not understand not only the theology, but the psychological dynamics and manipulation that's going on.

I certainly don't encourage people to get involved in it. That's a good question. He's asking, why are young people leaving the established church and going into the cult? I think for myself, in many churches, students are never taught what or why they believe something.

They are taught, you simply assume this, you accept this, but don't question anything. This is why I shared with the man that we need to get back to discovering what God's Word says. Man, when you get into God's Word, He already deals with all the problems that we are facing today, as we're going to see this week.

And that being a Christian is not only the most natural thing in the world, it's the most exciting thing in the world. And we have made Christianity something totally foreign to what the New Testament teaches. For a lot of people, they have established Christianity.

If you do four laws, you're saved. If you do ten follow-up books, you're a mature Christian. If you go to Bill Gothard, you got all your problems solved.

We got it neatly packaged, and that becomes the standard by what we judge Christianity. But Christianity is not that. Christianity is a whole walking by faith every day in a relationship with God that grows and gets better and better all the time.

And that is a living, vital, dynamic relationship. And we have failed to communicate this in many of our churches. And a lot of it is because a lot of pastors are coming out of seminaries, which tend to turn more and more liberal in their theology and teaching, and they offer people watered-down human anthropology.

Well, I can go to the university if I want to get that. The question is, what is unique about Christianity? What do we have to offer us the church, different from any social club or university? We need to get back to see what God has revealed to us concerning these things. One more, and then we'll close.

Yeah, and this is one of the most exciting things. He's asking a question concerning extra-biblical authority concerning the Trinity and other doctrines. Oftentimes you hear Jehovah's Witnesses or Victor Paul Weirwill, founder of the Way International, he'll say that the Trinity was not taught until the 4th or 5th century, which is totally unhistorical.

All you have to do is study the early church fathers and go back and read how every cult that we confront today was confronted by the early church in the first three and four centuries. It's amazing that there's nothing new under the sun. The Jehovah's Witnesses are simply the old Aryan heresy.

The Christian Science are simply the old Gnostic heresy. You go right down the line. What puts us to shame is as you read the early church fathers of the first four centuries, their argumentation and apologetics was brilliant in dealing with the Trinity and the person of Jesus Christ and salvation.

If you want a great study of apologetics and refuting the cults, read the early church fathers of the first four centuries. We see this not only back to the first century, but as we're going to see tomorrow night, that Trinity is taught throughout Scripture. We'll close.

Tomorrow morning at 11 o'clock we're going to have a great time. I trust you'll be here. Thank you so much.

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