

IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST A “CULT”?

Introduction

- 1) I have heard from some who have become members of the church state that their families and friends think they have become members of a “cult”
- 2) Is the church of Christ a “cult”? Does it have the common characteristics of a “cult”?
- 3) *Note:* “Church of Christ” is one scriptural term/name that describes the saints of God in any locality (Rom. 16:16); it is *not* a denominational designation; Christ’s church not a denomination
 - a) “Denomination” – a part of a whole (e.g. money); Christ’s church is the whole, not a part

I) What is a “CULT”?

- A) Various definitions have been given, but general characteristics are:
- 1) Secretive in activities and rituals
 - 2) Unwilling for open investigation of teachings, practices, and business affairs
 - 3) Follow a self-appointed human leader who initially developed beliefs and practices
 - 4) Sole source of truth in the world today (extra-Biblical revelation)
 - 5) Unconventional methods of study and interpretation
 - 6) Members taught to accept teachings even if not reasonable or rational
 - 7) Believe that they possess secret truths revealed only to them

II) Is the Church of Christ a CULT?

- A) ***Secretive in activities and worship?*** NO!
 - 1) Worship and Bible studies open to any and all peaceful, inquisitive seekers
 - 2) Jesus was open to all who sought the truth (Jn. 1:46; 3:1ff; Matt. 11:28-30)
- B) ***Unwilling for open investigation?*** NO!
 - 1) Truth has nothing to fear from open and fair investigation (1 Jn. 4:1)
 - 2) Debating questions of truth and error is encouraged and needed (Acts 15:2, 7a)
 - 3) Anything said or done is open for careful investigation in light of Bible teaching
 - a) Invite such investigation so that truth can be seen (1 Pet. 3:15; Matt. 5:16)
 - 4) Business affairs are “on-the-level” [lawful] for inspection by any interested party
- C) ***Follow a self-appointed human leader?*** NO!
 - 1) Follow Jesus, the Son of God, sent by Father, took on humanity to be a perfect sacrifice
 - 2) No man or human counsel developed beliefs and practices – gospel of Jesus Christ
 - 3) No control by human organization or board; no so-called modern prophets or apostles
- D) ***Sole source of extra-Biblical truth?*** NO!
 - 1) No heavenly revelation outside of New Testament of Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-2)
 - 2) Not add to or take away from written word (Rev. 22:18-19)
- E) ***Unconventional methods of interpretation?*** NO!
 - 1) Use commonly understood and accepted methods of Biblical interpretation
 - 2) Discern divine commands/statements, approved apostolic examples, and necessary implications; respect silence of scripture; understand specific and generic authority
 - 3) Illustrated in Old Testament examples, Jesus’ teaching, and apostolic teaching
 - 4) Rightly divide the scriptures (2 Tim. 2:15) and understand the Bible alike (1 Cor. 1:10)
- F) ***Accept doctrines even if unreasonable or irrational?*** NO!
 - 1) God’s revealed truths are reasonable and rational (Acts 26:24-25); avoid absurdities
- G) ***Possess secret truth revealed only to them?*** NO!
 - 1) What was once a mystery has now been revealed in the New Testament (Eph. 3:3-5)
 - 2) All men can know the truth and follow Christ (Jn. 8:31-32)

Conclusion

The church revealed and patterned in the New Testament is not a cult, sect, or denomination. It is the one body and one way to heaven (Eph. 4:4; Acts 24:14). Let God add you to it today!