

The Uniqueness of Christianity

(Selected Scriptures)

7/30/06

Acts 11:26 - And **the disciples were called Christians** first in Antioch.
The word "Christian" means "a Christ-like one"

Christianity is not merely a "religion", but a relationship (this is essentially what makes Christianity stand apart from all other world religions and cults). True Christianity is not a list of man-made rules (Legalism), but a living relationship with a living Savior.

What is it that separates Christianity from all other world religions, cults, and "isms"?

I. Christianity is inseparably anchored to a unique <u>SAVIOR</u>

(Jesus Christ is LORD, NOT a mere teacher, political leader, or military deliverer)
Matthew 1:23; Hebrews 7:26; Matthew 3:17; John 5:23; John 7:46
What other religion has a Savior who was virgin born, lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death and rose again on the third day?

II. Christianity submits to the authority of a unique <u>BOOK</u>

(The Bible is the true Christian's only authority for his/her beliefs and practices)
Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

III. Christianity proclaims a unique <u>GOSPEL MESSAGE</u>

(Salvation is by Grace alone, through Faith alone, in Christ alone)
Ephesians 2:8-9

IV. Christianity models the character and conduct of a unique <u>MASTER</u>

(A Christian will reproduce the transferable attributes of Jesus Christ)
Matthew 10:25; Luke 6:40; John 13:15; 1Cor 11:1; 1 John 2:6; Col 1:28; Rom 8:29

V. Christianity produces a unique <u>FRUIT</u>

(A true Christian has a new Spirit, a new heart and life and bears a new fruit)
John 13:35; John 15:8; Galatians 5:22; Matthew 5:13-14; 1 Peter 2:9

VI. Christianity shares a unique <u>FELLOWSHIP</u>

(Truth, love, unity, worship and service are characteristics of a Christian Church)
Acts 4:32-33

VII. Christianity exhibits a unique <u>POWER</u>

(Christianity is not a pretend game; It involves a living God showing Himself and His Power to believers)
Romans 14:17; 1 Corinthians 4:20; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 5:4; 1 Corinthians 10:13



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Acts 11:26

And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And **the disciples were called Christians** first in Antioch.

The term "Christian" was a label given to the believers by those outside of Christ at Antioch who observed the similarities between what they had heard about Christ and what they observed in these people's lifestyles. The world coined the term "Christian" It was not a word used by Jesus Christ; nor was it a term given by God as a descriptive title of the followers of Christ.

The word "Christian" means "a Christ-like one;" a "follower of Christ" or a "little Christ"

Acts 26:28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

1 Peter 4:16 Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Believers were part of a unique class of people who followed "the way" and their lives and fellowships were given the title "the way" (again by outsiders of Christianity, who noticed their unique lifestyles).

Acts 24:14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:

Acts 19:9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

Acts 19:23 And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.

Acts 24:22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.

Christianity is not merely a "religion", but a relationship (this is essentially what makes Christianity stand apart from all other world religions and cults).

True Christianity is not a list of man-made rules (Legalism), but a living relationship with a living Savior.

When we speak of "Christianity" in this message, we are NOT speaking of mere nominal Christianity (that is a reference to those people who are Christian in Name, but not in heart); Rather we are speaking today about the uniqueness of Bible Christianity (true Christianity as describe in the Bible).

What is it that separates Christianity from all other world religions, cults, and "isms"?

I. Christianity is inseparably anchored to a unique SAVIOR

(Jesus Christ is LORD, NOT a mere teacher, political leader, or military deliverer)

What sets Christ apart from Moses, Muhammad, and Buddha?

- Christ is unique in His Birth (He was the Virgin Born Son of God who came from Heaven)
  Matthew 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.
- Christ is unique in His Nature & Character (He was perfectly holy and without any sin)
  Hebrews 7:26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;
  1 Peter 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:
- Christ is unique in what God the Father said about Him
  Matthew 3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.
  Matthew 17:5 While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.
- Christ is unique in the honor and worship He received
  John 5:23 That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.
  Matthew 2:11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.
- Christ is unique in His message & miracles
  John 7:46 The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.
  Mark 1:22 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.
- Christ is unique in His death and resurrection
  1. Christ would die at just the right time (at Passover)
  2. Christ would die in just the right way (by crucifixion and the shedding of blood) *Zechariah 12:10 "…and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him…"*
  3. Christ would die and the earth would become darkened and an earthquake would occur at just the moment His spirit left His body. (Mt. 27)
  4. Christ would rise again with an incorruptible body. Acts 13:35 Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

What other religion has a Savior who was virgin born, lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death and rose again on the third day?

II. Christianity submits to the authority of a unique BOOK

(The Bible is the true Christian's only authority for his/her beliefs and practices)

Note the following word pictures which depict the unique power of the Bible:

1. The Bible is a Sword (Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17)

   a. The Holy Spirit's offensive and defensive weapon is the Bible (Eph. 6:17). God is speaking by no other means today.

   b. According to Heb. 4:12, the Bible as a sword is:

      (1) Living ("quick" KJV)
      (2) Powerful
      (3) Piercing - ("sharper...piercing")
      (4) Penetrating ("dividing asunder")
      (5) Convicting ("discerner [judge] of the thoughts and intents of the heart")

2. The Bible is a Mirror (James 1:23-25)
   It reflects the mind of God and the true nature and condition of man.

3. The Bible is a Seed (Mk. 4:1-20 *v. 14)
   As a seed, the Bible produces life, growth and fruit.

4. The Bible is water (Eph. 5:26)
   The Bible cleanses and quenches thirst.

5. The Bible is a Lamp and Light (Ps. 119:1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 105)
   It offers protection from danger and guidance into the right way.

6. The Bible is a hammer (Jer. 23:29)
   It has ability to tear down (humble) and build up (edify).

7. The Bible is a Fire (Jer. 20:9; Lk. 24:32).
   It convicts, judges, and purifies.

8. The Bible is Nourishing Food
   a. It is milk that causes growth (I Pet. 2:2)
   b. It is meat that gives strength (Heb. 5:14; I Cor. 3:1-3)

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

2 Peter 1:21
For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake [as they were] moved by the Holy Ghost.

Eight Rational Proofs for Inspiration

1. **Unity** - The Bible was written by means of 40 different writers, in three languages (Hebrew and Aramaic - O.T.; Greek - N.T.), over a 1,500 year period, and yet the Scriptures have only one theme: namely, Jesus Christ and His salvation of mankind through His sacrificial and substitutionary death (See: Lk. 24:25-27; Jn. 5:39, 46; Acts 10:43, 18:28; I Cor. 15:3).

2. **Prophecy** - Fulfilled by Jesus at His first coming (Mt. 5:17; Lk. 24:27; Jn. 19:24)
   EX: Ps. 22 - written about 1,000 B.C.
   Is. 53 - written about 750 B.C.

3. **Honesty** - Shows people as they really are. The Bible's heroes are not "sugar-coated!" Rather, the faults of even the greatest are brought out (Abraham, Moses, David, Peter).
   The Bible also describes sin as it is; heaven and hell as they are; and God as He is (example of the tension between election and free will - If man wrote the Bible, he would have relieved it).

4. **Durability** - The Bible has lasted through the ages, though attempts have been made to exterminate this Book as no other (EX: Jer. 36:1-2, 27-28).
   Voltaire, the French infidel, said: "Another century, [and] there will not be another Bible on earth." After his death, his printing press was used to print Bibles!

5. **Power** - To change (transform) lives.

6. **Freshness** - George Mueller said: "I read through the Bible 100 times, and each time it is new to me."

7. **Scientific Accuracy** –
   The earth is round (a circle) – Is. 40:22
   The earth hangs on nothing – Job 26:7
   The life of the flesh is in the blood (Gen 9:4; Lev. 17:11)
   Circumcision on 8th day – Lev. 12:3
   Universal flood
   Uncountable multitudes of stars – (Gen. 15:5, Jer. 33:22)
   100 billion stars in our Galaxy alone!
   Plants and Animals reproduce only after their Kind (Species) Gen. 1 etc

8. **Historical Accuracy** – Proven by – Recent Achaelogical discoverier (cities discovered customs proven etc.)
   Proven by – Comparing the Bible with other Historical writings contemporary with the Bible
   Ex. Josephus- cp. Acts 12 – Herod's speech and Death
   With Josephus. Antiquities Book XIX chap. 7:2-5 & 8:1-2

III. Christianity proclaims a unique <u>GOSPEL MESSAGE</u>

(Salvation is by Grace alone, through Faith alone, in Christ alone)

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

"**<u>by</u> grace . . . <u>through</u> faith"** - Note: It is <u>not</u> "by faith <u>through</u> grace", which would put the emphasis on man's faith.

The prepositions prove that:

--Grace is the <u>cause</u> of salvation
--Faith is the <u>channel</u> of salvation

"Grace" =**G**od's
Riches
At
Christ's
Expense

"Saved" = Delivered, rescued. In context, salvation means to liberate from spiritual death (v. 1) and provide spiritual life. To be <u>acquitted</u> from God's <u>wrath</u> Ov. 3), to be provided with God's favor. To <u>absolve</u> from sin's penalty, and provide eternal forgiveness.

Salvation is negative and positive: to save <u>from</u> sin and its consequences; <u>to</u> eternal life and its blessings.

We have been <u>untied</u> from slavery; we have been <u>set free</u> from blindness and lostness; <u>loosed</u> from the pangs of death and hell; we have been <u>snatched</u> from danger.

ILLUS: the testimony of the <u>Indian and the worm</u>

"Faith" is the only requirement for salvation.

"Jn. 3:16 - "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Jn. 3:36 - "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Jn. 6:28, 29 - "Then said they unto him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent."

"And <u>that</u> not of yourselves" - What does the neuter word "that" refer to? That which is not from ourselves. Is it the grace (fem. gender) or faith (fem.) or is it all? The grace and faith, all of which spell salvation?

The "that" refers to salvation by grace through faith.

"It is the gift of God" - Rom. 6:23 - gift
I Jn. 5:11 - given us eternal life
Jn. 10:28 - "I give unto them eternal life

A gift is not earned, a paycheck is.

When Jesus said, "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30), he was indicating that His work was complete; that is, the end had been reached (Bill Jackson).

ILLUS: Hymn - "Jesus Paid It All" If Jesus paid it all, there is no more to pay.

Is. 53:5, 6 - Substitute - EX: Basketball and a man "subbing" for the other. When a substitute takes one's place, the former team player must get off the field. When Christ took our place, we got off the field. We no longer try to work for our salvation.

An infinite price was paid; we have an infinite salvation. If it was finite., it would run out. EX: When we had been in Heaven for 1,000 years, an angel would come up to you, tap on your shoulder, and say, "Your time is up. You now have to spend eternity in hell."

Romans 10:3 - "Do"
Romans 10:4 - "Done"

"If you living the truth of Rom. 10:4, you're a missionary; if 10:3, you're a mission field."

"Evangelism is 'done' people going to 'do' people and telling them that the work was 'done.'"

You cannot be "doing" and "done" at the same time. If you are "doing," you are not "done," and if you are "done," you don't need to do. (Bill Jackson)

Religion says "Do"; The Bible says it is "Done"

ILLUS: Man who missed the tent revival meeting and was told "It's too late" (MacArthur, Ephesians, p. 61).

Diagnostic Question:

> If you died today and stood before God and He said to you, "Why should I let you into my heaven?" If the response is "I've lived a good life" "I didn't do anything to deserve otherwise" "I've been a good Baptist" "I was baptized as an infant," etc. -- They are trusting their works.

"Not of works" -

II Tim. 1:9 - "Who hath saved us, and calls us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Titus 3:5 - "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Purgatory is a place of doing. Mass is an occasion of doing. Come back next week and we will do some more.

Acts 13:39 - "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye would not be justified by the law of Moses."

Gal. 2:16 - "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall not flesh be justified."

Gal. 3:24 - "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

A "works" salvation denies the sufficiency and efficacy of Christ's work on Calvary.

"When a sufficient price is paid, no further price can be exacted" (Bill Jackson, Do Or Done, p. 14).

You can't add to infinity. Christ is infinite and His work is of infinite value.

"Grace" (v. 8) describes what God has done. "Works" (v. 9) describes what man can do.

Do you want what you can do or what God can do?

The point about our being "dead" (v. 1, 5) proves that someone outside of ourselves must give us life. "When a person chokes or drowns and stops breathing, there is nothing he can do. If he ever breathes again, it will be because someone else starts him breathing" (MacArthur, p. 61).

What work could a dead man do to rescucitate his life?

"Lest any man should boast" - SEE: Rom. 3:20-27; 4:1-3

To say that God provided 99% of our salvation and that we must do the remaining 1% is to give us something to boast about in Heaven.

IV. Christianity models the character and conduct of a unique MASTER

(A Christian will reproduce the transferable attributes of Jesus Christ)

A true Christian resembles the transferable attributes of Jesus Christ

Matthew 10:25
It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord.
Luke 6:40
The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

We are encouraged to model (copy) the transferable attitudes and actions of Jesus Christ:

Joh 13:15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.
1Co 11:1 ¶ Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.
Php 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
1Jo 2:6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.
1Jo 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Col 1:28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

Paul's purpose (his motive, his goal) = "That we might present (as an offering to God) every man perfect (complete; mature) in Christ"
Paul's whole life and ministry was wrapped up in this goal: mature believers.

Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

God's goal is that we would be "a perfect man" = a complete, mature man (in contrast to the reference to "children" - v. 14)

God's goal is that we would receive all that Christ has to offer us - for life and godliness.

God wants us to have the whole measurer of Christ's fullness. His will is that we come to a full maturity. This fullness does not come from us, but from Christ.

If we only grow half way, we have not fulfilled God's will for our lives. His will is total maturity.

No parent would be pleased if their children only grew up to the second grade education or up to 10 years emotionally, or up to 12 years physically.

ILLUS: the sadness of mental and physical retardation is not as sad as spiritual retardation - when we fail to grow up (Heb. 5:11-14).

Ro 8:29 - For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

"Predestined" = to determine in advance. To mark out with a boundary beforehand.

Predestination in this verse refers not to salvation but sanctification.

Our being "conformed to the image of His Son" has ultimate reference to our future bodily resurrection.

I Cor. 15:49 - "And as we have borne the image of the earth, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

"We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope (Rom. 8:24) in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." (I Jn. 3:2, 3).

Our lives are to be formed into Christ-likeness.
This is God's plan for our lives here and now, not merely in the future.

When we were saved, we became God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

Being a "Christian" means a "Christ-like-one" or a "follower of Christ" (Acts 11:26, 26:28; I Pet. 4:16).

**You will be like whom you follow.

God does not want His children to be conformed (put into the mold of) to this world (Rom. 12:1, 2), but to His Son.

You were not saved to be conformed to the image of some movie star, rock musician, sports figure, millionaire, or other celebrity!

"First born" - a title of honor, authority, and pre-eminence, not a reference to origin (Col. 1:15; cp. Ps. 89:27).

Jesus is called the "first born of the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." (Col. 1:18).

Ultimate perfection is found in Jesus Christ! (Hutz, BJU - Romans, p. 52).

To stoop to conform your life to anyone else is to choose far less than the best!

The goal of discipleship is Christ-likeness.

I SEE JESUS by Summer Waters, age 11

I saw Jesus last week.
He was wearing blue jeans and an old shirt.
He was up at the church building;
He was alone and working hard.
For just a minute he looked a little like one of our members.
But it was Jesus ... I could tell by his smile.

I saw Jesus last Sunday.
He was teaching a Bible class.
He didn't talk real loud or use long words,
But you could tell he believed what he said.
For just a minute, he looked like my Bible teacher.
But it was Jesus ... I could tell by his loving voice.

I saw Jesus yesterday.
He was at the hospital visiting a friend who was sick.
They prayed together quietly. For just a minute he looked like Bro Jones.
But it was Jesus ... I could tell by the tears in his eyes.

I saw Jesus this morning.
He was in my kitchen making my breakfast and fixing me a special lunch.
For just a minute he looked like my mom.
But it was Jesus ... I could feel the love from his heart.

I see Jesus everywhere,
Taking food to the sick ... Welcoming others to his home,
Being friendly to a newcomer ... & for just a minute,
I think he's someone I know.
But it's always Jesus ... I can tell by the way he serves.

Go be Jesus to someone today! Someone's looking for you!

V. Christianity produces a unique <u>FRUIT</u>

(A true Christian has a new Spirit, a new heart and life and bears a new fruit)

Sharing His Love (John 13:35) and Bearing His Fruit (John 15:8) are 2 clear evidences of Christ-likeness

John 13:35
By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.
John 15:8
Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Galatians 5:22
But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

The Christian is to have a lifestyle that is uniquely different than the world

Matthew 5:13-14
Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Deuteronomy 14:2
For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.
Titus 2:14
Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.
1 Peter 2:9 *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

1. The Christian has a unique lifestyle in his/her <u>family relationships</u>

a. In a Christian home, husbands love their wives and lead their families

Ephesians 5:25
Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

b. In a Christian home, wives honor their husbands and allow them to provide for the families need for finances, safety, direction, and Biblical instruction.

Ephesians 5:22-24
Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

c. In a Christian home, parents love their children, discipline them, and train them, and children obey and honor their parents

Ephesians 6:1-4
Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

2. The Christian has a unique lifestyle in his/her <u>ethics & morals</u>

Truth (righteousness) and moral purity (holiness)

Ephesians 4:24
And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

3. The Christian has a unique lifestyle in his/her standards for <u>conduct and appearance</u>

1 Peter 3:3-5
Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

4. The Christian has a unique lifestyle in his/her <u>recreational and entertainment choices</u>

Psalms 101:3
I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. This principle applies to what one allows to enter via his eye gate or ear gate. (T.V. Internet and Music are issues to be considered here)

Psalms 40:3
And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.

VI. Christianity shares a unique FELLOWSHIP

(Truth, love, unity, worship and service are characteristics of a Christian Church)

Acts 4:32-33
And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

1. A Christian Church will have Christ-centered uncompromising, truthful preaching
2. A Christian Church will have Christ-centered spiritual worship & majestic music
3. A Christian Church will have Christ-centered loving friendships
4. A Christian Church will have Christ-centered ministry and service

VII. Christianity exhibits a unique POWER

Romans 14:17
For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

1 Corinthians 4:20
For the kingdom of God *is* not in word, but in power.

Power to live a new life
2 Corinthians 5:17
Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Power to overcome the world
1 John 5:4
For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Power to endure tribulation (1 Peter 4:16)
1 Corinthians 10:13
There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Bible Christianity is uniquely different than the Cults



Know the marks of a cult!

1. ***Cults Preach Another <u>JESUS</u> (II Cor. 11:3-4)***
   (They deny Christ's person and work)
   A. They deny His <u>Person</u> (I Jn. 4:1-6; II Jn. 7-11)
   B. They deny His <u>Work</u>

2. ***Cults Believe Another <u>AUTHORITY</u>***
   (They undermine the Bible)
   A. New revelations (Deut. 13:1-5, 18:20-22)
   B. The traditions of men (Mt. 15:9, 13-14)
   C. Faulty Interpretation (2 Pet.3:16;2 Tim.2:14-18)

3. ***Cults Teach Another <u>GOSPEL</u> (Gal. 1:6-10)***
   (They peddle a works salvation)
   **Legalism - Col. 2:8, 16-23; I Tim. 4:1-3*

4. ***Cults Follow Another <u>LEADER</u> (Mt. 20:25-27)***
   (They are devoted to a man)

5. ***Cults Utilize Another <u>MOTIVE</u>***
   (They manipulate by fear and intimidation)

What is a religious cult?

Definition:

A religious cult is a unified, organized group of people who differ significantly from Biblical Christianity; rally around and dogmatically support a man or the unquestioned teachings of a man or men; claim sole possession of the truth; either deny cardinal doctrines of Scripture and/or twist Scripture to make minor issues major dogma and dividing issues; emphasizes external conformity to man made rules; erodes Christian liberty & individuality; and promotes an arrogant, exclusivistic, isolationist, spirit.

What is a Cult in simple terms?
In a nutshell, the definition of a cult can be summarized by a concise "mathematical" formula:

"A cult is any religious group which:
- ***(+) ADDS to the <u>Scriptures</u>***
- ***(-) SUBTRACTS from <u>Christ</u>***
- ***(x) MULTIPLIES <u>salvation requirements</u>***
- ***(÷) DIVIDES the <u>church</u>"***

(Author unknown)

1. Cults Preach Another JESUS (II Cor. 11:3-4)
(They deny Christ's person and work)

"Unethical businesses often advertise low-priced products to get consumers in the door. Once in, customers are subjected to manipulative sales tactics designed to get them to leave with something other than what they came in for. This "bait and switch" tactic is also characteristic of dangerous religious groups" (Martin R. De Haan II, "How to identify a dangerous religious group", Radio Bible Class, p.16)

Cults will preach about Jesus; but not the Jesus of the Bible. They will use much Biblical terminology but slip in gross errors about the nature of Christ or redefine their terminology so that the result is heresy.

A. They deny His Person (I Jn. 4:1-6; II Jn. 7-11)
His deity is explained away.

B. They deny His Work (Gal. 2:4, 21, 6:14 cp. Heb. 10:14)
His atonement is minimized.
The efficacy of the cross is nullified.

2. Cults Believe Another AUTHORITY
(They undermine the Bible)

The cult, its leaders, and its doctrine are the authority-- claim of "special discoveries"--"You need us to know the 'real' truth."

False authorities added to Holy Scripture:

Jehovah's Witnesses: The Writings of Charles T. Russell and Joseph F. Rutherford

Mormons: The Doctrines and Covenants; The Pearl of a Great Price; The Book of Mormon

Christian Science: Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures

Seventh Day Adventists: The Writings of Ellen G. White

Unification Church: The Writings of Moon

Roman Catholic Church: The decrees of the Vatican

God warns about adding or deleting from His Word -

Rev. 22:18-19

Dt. 4:2, 12:32 - "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. . . What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

Prov. 30:6 - "Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

Titus 1:14 - "Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth."

A. New revelations (Deut. 13:1-5, 18:20-22)

Ex. Joseph Smith - Book of Mormon
Charles T. Russell - dimensions of pyramids gave him the date 1914 for the return of Christ

B. The traditions of men (Mt. 15:8-9, 13-14)

They show a "token" respect for the Bible.

Independent research is not encouraged; rather it's often discouraged!
They appeal much to reason, logic, "good sense," rather than the clear statements of Scripture.

C. Faulty Interpretation (II Pet. 3:16; II Tim. 2:14-18)
Acts 20:29-30 - "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

*They allegorize the Bible - EX: II Tim. 2:14-18.

Hymenaeus and Philetus allegorized the Resurrection.

Gnostics taught that a "spiritual" resurrection occurred at baptism or when one was cognizant of truth.

*They segment the Bible - they build doctrine on proof text without context.
(They explain away everything that contradicts their presupposed system of doctrine)

In all cults, critical thinking is discouraged. Questioning the cults dogma is anathema. In order to manipulate the minds of the members or inquirers many cult coercion techniques are used to neutralize the person's mind and to begin an period of intensive indoctrination: (See Larson, p. 16-18 for a list)

3. Cults Teach Another <u>GOSPEL</u> (Gal. 1:6-10)
(They peddle a works salvation)
(Not the Gospel of grace)

Salvation to a cult is inseparably linked to your faithfulness and membership in <u>their</u> "church." They are the only <u>true</u> "church."

*Legalism - Col. 2:8, 16-23; I Tim. 4:1-3

A religious cult will major on a peculiar set of "doctrinal insights" which no other group has been privy to, thus instilling a "we" verses "they" complex.

"In a society that is biblically illiterate, the deception of a cult is particularly enticing if it claims to have "restored" certain truths that have been lost or undiscovered." (Bob Larson, <u>Cults</u> p. 15)

They major on the minors and minor on the majors.

Salvation to a Christian Scientist is in ridding the mind of the error that there is anything from which to be saved.

4. Cults Follow Another <u>LEADER</u> (Mt. 20:25-27)
(They are devoted to a man)
(Not the Lord Jesus Christ)

Herbert W. Armstrong -	The World Today
Victor Paul Wierwille -	The Way
Russell T. Rutherford -	J.W.'s
Joseph Smith/Brigham Young -	Mormon
Mary Baker Eddy -	Christian Science
The Pope -	R.C.C.

"In the beginning many groups (may) display sincere expressions of a humble desire to better society and follow God's will. At some point the founder's teachings are codified into an organized system of revelational authority. Allegiance to the founder's ideals becomes an absolute requirement...What then develops is a "type of institutional dogmatism and a pronounced intolerance for any position but their own" (Bob Larson citing Walter Martin, p.15)

Their leaders demand total allegiance and dedication to their cause. People become a slave to the cult, not to Christ.

In doing so they lay heavy burdens on people (Mt. 23:3-4, 13).

Their human leaders represent God, and their word must not be violated.

Their human leaders are the final authority. All alternative views are denounced as Satanic counterfeits.

They are super organizers. The less truth, the more necessary to be highly organized.

All cults have in common a "centralized authority" that tightly structures both philosophy and life-style" (Larson, p.14)

How do you detect a false spiritual leader? (See Dehaan, p.9-10)

5. Cults Utilize Another MOTIVE
(They manipulate by fear and intimidation)
(Not love for Christ)

1. The fear of man

   Cp. the often repeated phrase - "For fear of the Jews"

   Since "salvation" is tied to one's relationship to the cult, to leave the cult is in the minds of many, to leave Christ, the Bible, & Eternal life.

2. The praise of man

   The motivation for many cult members is generated be rewards for excessive zeal.

3. The love of money & success

   The motivation of all cult leaders is not love for Christ, but is to have more of the 3 B's:
   Bodies, Buildings, and Bucks.

   Financial exploitation - I Tim. 6:5

See: I Peter 2:9-10

v.9 - "But ye" - in contrast to the unbelievers who stumble over Christ and His Word

God describes believers four ways:

1) ***"A chosen generation" -*** a selected, elected race of believers; a generation of God's sovereign choice

2) ***"A royal priesthood" -*** cp. v. 5. A kingly priesthood

   In the Old Testament, "the levitical priests were not kings; and the Davidic kings were not priests (II Chron. 26:16-21), but in Christ believers are made both kings and priests" (Rev. 1:6) (Anderson, RBP, p. 36)

3) ***"An holy nation" -*** (SEE: Exod. 19:5-6). Israel did not obey God's covenant and hence forfeited this designation. Now, true believers are set apart by God and for God.

4) ***"A peculiar people"*** - The word *"peculiar"* in this verse does not mean "odd" or "strange," but <u>special</u> - belonging only and exclusively to God.

   We are God's very own property, His special treasure, His prized possession. We are uniquely His!

   "That" - Here is the purpose for which God made us His own. God saved you so that you by your life would ***"show forth"*** (tell out; proclaim; or "advertise") the praiseworthy virtue and power of God, who has once and for all (Aorist tense) called us out of the domain of Satanic darkness and into God's wonderful light (I Jn. 1:5).

   I Thes. 5:5 - *"Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness."*

   Col. 1:13 - *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son."*

   Eph. 5:8 - *"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light"*

   Cp. Acts 26:18; Jn. 8:12

V. 10

No one is born a "child of God." None of us were a ***"people"*** of God in time past, but now because of the new birth (1:23), we are!

At one time were without the mercy of God, under His wrath (Jn. 3:36), but now (since *"coming"* to Christ - v. 4), we have been shown mercy.

God terminated our darkness and brought us into His light at conversion.

God terminated our status as non-citizens of Heaven and objects of wrath and made our citizenship Heaven and our relationship with Him one of peace and security.

Conclusion: Song: “Oh, It is wonderful to be a Christian”