The Marks of a Heretic

2 Peter 2:1-3
2/8/09

Introduction:

- ***For your sake and for the sake of the truth, you must know the marks of a Heretic****!*
  (realize the characteristics and mode of operation of a divisive false teacher)

I. ***The heretic does his work by*** **INFILTRATION** (v.1a)
(They mingle & blend with believers)

II. ***The heretic does his work by*** **INDOCTRINATION** (v.1b)
(They teach divisive & false doctrines)

III. ***The heretic does his work by*** **INSTIGATION** (v.2)
(They gather a cultic following and shame the Truth's reputation)

A. **They instigate others to FOLLOW their ways of deceit** (v.2a)

B. **They instigate others to REJECT Christ's way of truth** (v.2b)

IV. ***The heretic does his work by*** **EXPLOITATION** (v.3a)
(They cleverly extract money from God's people)

Conclusion: The heretic will come to his end by **inevitable CONDEMNATION** (v.3b)

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Introduction:

This whole chapter describes the characteristics, conduct and condemnation of false teachers. Peter devotes his time and attention to this matter so that we will do the same.

In these last days, we need to be keenly aware of false prophets and false teachers. As John McArthur writes, “Nothing is more wicked than for someone to claim to speak for God to the salvation of souls when in reality he speaks for Satan to the damnation of souls” (MacArthur, note, p. 1925).

Note the warning of Jesus concerning the last days (Mt. 24:4-5, 11, 24) (Lk. 21:8; Mk. 13:21-22)

False Prophets and Cults thrive in a societal climate where people have the following problems:

Loneliness - They "approach the unwary with an excessively friendly invitation to a lecture, free meal, weekend workshop, or other activity offering instant solutions to overwhelming problems (most often without identifying themselves) (Bob Larson, Cults, p.15)
They then, offer a "family" and employ a "love-bombing" technique to people who are longing for acceptance, approval, and a belonging relationship.

Indecision - They thrive on people who are totally dependent on strong leadership

Disappointment - With organized religion and denominations that had a form of religion but did not meet the people's inner-most needs. The bitter taste of dead orthodoxy created a thirst for fresh enthusiasm and a new spiritual experience.

Mental & emotional disorders - People who lack the ability to think rationally, and analytically are prime victims.

Doctrinal confusion - The cult will offer dogmatic answers

Pride - They believe God has raised them up to accomplish what others have failed to do. Their vision is to recover the lost purpose of the "apostate" church. With exclusivistic arrogance they delude themselves into thinking that they alone have been entrusted with the truth. The opportunity to be a part of a select group of God's chosen servants is attractive.

Beware: Cults are seductive!

1. They <u>look</u> good - Mt. 7:15; II Cor. 11:13-14)

II Tim. 3:1, 5 - "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. . . Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

II Pet. 2:1, 17-19 - ""But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction. . . These are wells without water, [The thirsty world goes to them to drink, but they do not satisfy.] clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."

2. They <u>sound</u> good - Rom. 16:17-18

3. They minister in the "name of Jesus" - Mt. 7:22-23

(The cultist will be zealous, confident, claim to be sole repositories of truth, and apparently "religious")

"Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully" (Jer. 48:10).

What Satan says is false; therefore, God's people must be able to detect error. Satan's co-workers are:

<u>F</u> ake
<u>A</u> ppealing
<u>L</u> iars
<u>S</u> eductive
<u>E</u> nticing

God gave you a pastor (Eph. 4:11-12) to equip you so that you will not sway in the winds of Satan's false teachings (Eph.4:14)

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 Scriptures
(-) **SUBTRACTS** from Christ
(x) **MULTIPLIES** salvation requirements
(÷) **DIVIDES** the church"

(Author unknown)

- ***For your sake and for the sake of the truth, you must know the marks of a Heretic****!*
  (realize the characteristics and mode of operation of a divisive false teacher)

I. ***The heretic does his work by*** **INFILTRATION** (v.1a)
(They mingle & blend with believers)

"But there were false prophets" - Here, Peter introduces a stark contrast from the true prophets (the true "holy men of god" who were moved by God's Spirit).

"There shall be" - not "there may be" or "might be", but will be. It's just a matter of time.

If they don't actually enter the doors of our church, they will certainly enter the doors of our homes via TV, radio or internet (EX: Harold Camping).

A "false teacher" is anyone who teaches a message of human invention (v. 20) and not divine Scripture given by God's Spirit.

Why would God allow false prophets or false teachers to infiltrate God's people? Answer: to test their love. Satan sends them to divide and conquer (as tares among the wheat or goats among the sheep), but God often allows such infiltration to test His people (SEE: Deut. 13:1 – 3).

II. ***The heretic does his work by*** **INDOCTRINATION** (v.1b)
(They teach divisive & false doctrines)

"Heresies" – a transliteration of the Greek word *heireseis* which refers to someone's self-willed opinion (i.e. "the will of man" – 1:21), causing the listeners to have to make a choice: a choice between two parties producing division and factions.

Schisms in the church body are always the result of men's opinions (usually over trivial fine points of doctrine) becoming more important than the "weightier matters" of God's Word.

Divisions are usually the result of men's personal opinions contesting or challenging the clear teachings of God's Word. A peculiar end-time teaching, for example, could be used as a dividing issue. A lack of clarity over what is cardinal dogma or essential doctrine usually provides fertile soil for the heretic's divisive tactics.

"Damnable heresies" - destructive divisive teachings. Such divisiveness destroys families, churches, friendships, and ultimately the one who holds to such teachings.

Jude also warned about those who would creep into churches unsuspectingly and would pervert or twist God's message of grace.

Jude 1:4
For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Even denying the Lord" - the reference is to the Lord (Master) Jesus Christ. They are so bold as to lead others (ever so seductively) into disregarding Christ's right to rule one's life. In fact, they outright contradict Christ, and foster a sense of distraction from Christ, leading to people who profess faith in Christ to forsake Him (either practically or theologically or both).

Matthew 10:33
But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

"Lord" = *despot* – supreme authority or sovereign ruler. Peter is warning about false prophets who deny the sovereign Lordship of Christ. They will deny His person and work so as to deny one's need to trust in Him and submit Him. They overtly or covertly attack Him so as to exploit and ruin others.

In Deut. 32:5-6, God says that He bought Israel, yet they rejected the God who bought them and lived corruptly.

Deuteronomy 32:5-6
They have corrupted themselves, their spot *is* not *the spot* of his children: *they are* a perverse and crooked generation. Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? *is* not he thy father *that* hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?

Note: The word **"bought"** *(agorazo)* is different than the word **"redeemed"** (*lutrao*).

Here, Peter is not speaking of redeemed people, but of people who could have been redeemed since the price for their redemption was paid for them by His shed blood. However, due to unbelief, they could not benefit by His gracious provision for them.

The price for their release was given by Christ, but they rejected Him and His finished work; so they will perish in their sin.

"False teachers. . . denying the Lord that bought them" - A proof text against the notion of limited atonement (the "L" in Calvinism's "TULIP").

The word "bought" (*agorazo*) is a term of the marketplace or the ancient "agora." The word is used literally of buying food at a market place (Mt. 14:15). Here the word speaks of spiritually paying a price so as to purchase someone. The price was Christ's blood shed at Calvary (cp. 1 Cor. 6:20, 7:23; Rev. 5:9, 14:3-4).

This verse does prove one very important theological point and that being: Christ's death is sufficient for all (even for false teachers who will end up perishing), but His death is only efficient for those who repent and believe on Christ.

Those who hold a "limited atonement" view would ask: Did Christ die for the sins of the non-elect? If He did, is not that extra "un-used" suffering a waste and is His work on the cross a failure as far as the lost are concerned?

Answer: Because Christ is God and therefore infinite, His death was infinite. He had to die an infinite death to satisfy His infinite holiness. Jesus would have to suffer as much in becoming a sin offering to atone for just Adam's sin, as He did for the whole world? It is the all-encompassing quality of His sacrifice that appeased the wrath of God. When you think of Christ dying for sin, it is improper to merely think of Him as dying for sins (plural) but better to understand that He died for sin as a whole!

***His death is sufficient for all men, but is only efficient for those who believe** (See: Chafer)

The Bible teaches that Christ died for all:

This, of course, does not mean that all are saved (universalism), but that all have the same opportunity to be saved. The payment has been made, whether or not it is accepted, imputed, or benefitted by.

1) *I John 2:1-2 - "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."*

2) *I Timothy 2:4 - "Who will have all men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth"*

3) *I Timothy 2:6 - "Who gave Himself a ransom for all"*

4) *I Timothy 4:10 - "Who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe" (Christ's death is sufficient for all, but only efficient for those who believe)*

5) *Hebrews 2:9 - "Christ...tasted death for every man"*

6) *Titus 2:11 - "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men"*

7) *II Peter 2:1 - "False teachers . . . even denying the Lord that bought them"*

8) God offers salvation to **"all"** (Is. 53:6; Mt. 11:28; Rom. 3:22; 5:18; Acts 17:30; II Pet. 3:9)

9) God offers salvation to the **"world"** (Jn. 1:29, 3:16-17; II Cor. 5:18-20; I Jn. 4:14)

10) God offers salvation to the **"whosoevers"** (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 10:13; Rev. 22:17) ("Whosoever" occurs 110 times in the New Testament)

"The death of Christ is like some benefactor paying the tuition of all students in all schools everywhere. If that could be true, what should we be telling students? The good news that their tuition are paid. *Christ died for all. What should we be telling the world?" (Ryrie, p. 323)

So Christ's atonement is not limited in its provision but in its application.

His provision is enough for all, but His provision will only be applied to His elect or to those who believe (depending on which perspective we are looking at our salvation from).

"Bring upon themselves" - they will have no one to blame for their eternal destruction but themselves. (they will not be able to blame others or even God, since God made adequate provision for them).

"Swift destruction" – the false teachers spread destructive heresies and now they experience destructive hell-fire! They reap exactly what they sowed.

Note: When their destruction comes, it will come suddenly, unexpectedly, and swiftly! Destruction may not come immediately, but will come inevitably and when it does, it will be inescapable, as it will suddenly devour Christ's adversaries.

III. ***The heretic does his work by*** **INSTIGATION** (v.2)
(They gather a cultic following and shame the Truth's reputation)

A. They instigate others to FOLLOW their ways of deceit (v.2a)

The sad thing about heretics is this: they never "do it alone." They always acquire a following. They instigate others to follow their same pattern of heretical thinking, teaching, and living.

"Many" (not a few) end up imitating these influential heretics.

"Pernicious" – the same word as "lasciviousness" – Mk. 7:22; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19).

The word means to be without restraint or to have no self-control, resulting in shameless conduct. Such indecent lifestyles characterized the "wantonness" (same word as here) of Sodom & Gomorrah (2 Pet. 2:18).

Any teaching that breeds "license" or gives people the idea that they can be a "Christian" and live any way they want to, is a heresy.

B. They instigate others to REJECT Christ's way of truth (v.2b)

"By reason of whom" – because of the false teaching ("destructive heresies") which resulted in false living ("pernicious ways"), they brought about a false opinion in the minds of others (spectators of Christianity).

"The way of truth" – the proper path or road the truth should lead one to is rejected because of a bad testimony.

"Evil spoken of" – lit. to blaspheme. Evil teaching which results in evil living always leads to evil speaking on the part of the enemies of Christ. They are looking for a reason to reject Christ and His Word, and these false teachers give that reason to them.

"The world mocks and scoffs at the Gospel of Jesus Christ because of nominal Christians who do not follow the Lord they claim, and have been unmasked as hypocritical people" (MacArthur, Bible note, p. 1925).

The reputation of Christ and His truth is injured by the hypocrisy of the false teachers.

The heretics literally give Christianity a "black eye" (a bad testimony). Their teachings and lifestyles create a <u>stench</u> in the nostrils of the observing world. (As David did, when he high-handedly sinned by committing adultery and arranging a murder. He gave the enemies of God cause to blaspheme).

2 Samuel 12:14
Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *that is* born unto thee shall surely die.

IV. ***The heretic does his work by*** **<u>EXPLOITATION</u>** (v.3a)
(They <u>cleverly extract money</u> from God's people)

"Through covetousness" – an idolatrous desire to have more; a greediness (the word comes from *pleon* – "more" and *echo* – "to have." It means to want more than you should have. Selfish greed.

"<u>Feigned</u> words" - *plastois logois* – *Plastos* primarily denotes "formed, molded" (from *plasso* – to mold; English – "plastic"). Then, metaphorically, "made up, fabricated" (Vines, p. 233).

The heretic will mold or <u>shape</u> his words in such a way that he seems very believable; he is very convincing. But his goal is converts for personal gain.

"Make <u>merchandise</u> of you" - related to our English word "emporium," which refers to a "trading place" or a house of merchandise. The root *poros* referred to a <u>journey</u> or the <u>travel</u> of a businessman who sought to search far and wide to exploit his potential customers.

Here, Peter is referring to heretics who seek to draw away disciples after themselves for filthy lucre's sake.

Conclusion: The heretic will come to his end by **inevitable CONDEMNATION** (v.3b)

"A long time lingereth not" – It may seem like the heretic is getting away with his heresies for a long time, but his judgment is not standing idle. In other words, his judgment is coming (as a matter of a fact, it is already on its way).

"Their damnation (destruction – same as v. 1) **slumbereth not" –** Their destruction will not sleep; it will stay awake to swallow them up in the end.

God's destruction of the heretic is not napping. He neither slumbers nor sleeps and neither does His judgment.

"Peter is personifying destruction as if destruction were an executioner who is fully awake and alert, ready to act" (MacArthur, p. 1925).

His axe is ready to fall and when it does, it will fall quickly.

How to escape the heretic's snare:

1) Be walking close to Christ
   (the wolves can't get you, if you are next to the shepherd).

2) Know the truth
   (the better you know the truth, the better you will detect a lie).

John 8:32
And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.