

Bible Special 06-07-04a

This is Tuesday, July the 4th, 2006. We continue tonight our study on why we believe the Bible, what are the nature of the world religions that offer alternatives, satanic counterfeits, for the things that are found only in relationship with God. As we begin our study, let's take a moment to each of us individually exercise our priesthood.

We have the privilege, because of the Lord Jesus Christ, to go to God directly, no intervening priest. It's us speaking with the Holy Spirit's aid directly to God. And we can confess our sins.

We can claim God's grace and receive cleansing and forgiveness and be ready to receive the teaching ministry of God's spirit. Let's pray. Father, we are grateful for this opportunity to assemble, to spend time in fellowship and in the study of your word.

We thank you for your grace. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for your word and the ministry of the spirit so that we are not left in this life as orphans.

We are not without hope. We are not without opportunity. We are not without potential.

We know that because we are alive, you have a plan and purpose for us. We pray that our study this evening will help us to understand and pursue that purpose in the light of your word, by your grace, through the power of the Holy Spirit. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. We have seen in our studies so far a lot about religions of the world, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam. The subject we're going to address tonight is a little bit different.

Those are religions. What we're going to talk about tonight are cults. There are four major cults and many, many minor ones.

But the characteristics, once we study these four, you will understand what a cult is and what its characteristics are. You'll be able to pick up all the rest of the little fly-by-night cults. And you'll also be able to see them in history.

But we're going to talk about four. I think we will only get through two of them tonight. And we'll probably have to tackle the other two next time.

But first of all, we want to understand exactly what is a cult. There have been a lot of cults down through history. This is C-U-L-T-S.

We're not talking about cults or Celts. Although there have been a lot of Celts down through history, but that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about cults, C-U-L-T.

Most cults have these characteristics in common. See if you can commit them to memory and be able to bring them back to consciousness by the time the evening is over. First of all, people in a cult believe that all Christian churches that are not in their cult are wrong, utterly wrong,

hopelessly wrong, irretrievably wrong.

Only the cult is right. Everybody else is wrong. Their group is special.

They have the truth. Everyone else is in total, absolute error. All cults have in common... Now, wait a minute.

Do we think we're right? Do we know we're right? I mean, you wouldn't be here if you didn't think we're right, right? Well, I think I'm going to go to a group where we're all wrong. Let's go to the wrong club, where everything we believe is wrong. Let's go to the flat earth society.

Let's go to the I am a Martian club. I mean, we don't do that, right? Everyone thinks they're right or they wouldn't think what they think. What's the difference between us thinking we're right and somebody in a cult thinking they're right? Well, we really are right.

That's the difference. Do we recognize that there are a lot of denominations, there are a lot of Christian churches that are teaching truth from God to varying degrees? We're teaching it to a varying degree. We don't probably get it 100% right, but we're doing our best.

And there are a lot of others who are doing their best, right? We don't think that you have to be a member of Grace and Truth Bible Church to be saved. There are many, many, many good churches with good pastors who teach the Word of God. And we are not exclusive and we don't think that it's us or the lake of fire.

But a cult does. If you're not in the cult, you are not saved and you are not on the right track. So that's the first characteristic.

Secondly, cults do not believe Jesus is God. Now, pop quiz, remember way back when we first started talking about orthodox Christianity. Orthos? What does orthos mean? Everybody with braces, smile at me.

What does orthos mean? Straight. Orthodontic? Straight teeth. Or maybe you just have a straight dentist.

If he's an orthodontist, he's a straight dentist. He doesn't do anything but dentistry. An orthodontist, it means get your teeth straight.

Orthodoxy means straight doctrine. Straight truth. Your truth is straight.

It doesn't deviate. It isn't a deviant belief. What are the elements of orthodoxy? What makes Christianity Christianity? Remember, there are three parts.

A little hint there. What's the first part? The person and work of Jesus Christ. Now, what kind of person is Jesus? Is He God? Is He partly God or is He all God? Is He sort of a diminished God? Is He God in a can or God in a bottle? Is He God light? Is He the Reader's Digest condensed God? Or is He fully God? Careful now.

Is Jesus fully God or not? Don't be looking doubtful at me. Nod your head like this. Dog in the back window of the car.

Yes, Jesus is fully God. He is fully God. Don't ever let anyone tell you Jesus is anything less than fully God.

You're going to be in big trouble when you're standing there in front of Jesus at the judgment seat and He says, Did you really think I wasn't fully God? I'm telling you now, Jesus, the Bible tells us, and we will see these passages before we're finished. We need to cover a little bit about the deity of Christ. But for now, orthodoxy, Jesus is fully God now.

How about human? Is Jesus human? Is He fully human? Is He sort of glow-in-the-dark human? Is He superhuman? Is He beyond human? His humanity is just like your humanity and just like my humanity with one significant difference. He is without sin. He did not inherit the corruption of Adam.

That's the nature of the virgin birth. How did God do that? I don't know. I don't know how Jesus became fully human and didn't inherit sin.

Some people think, well, sin is transferred through the Father and because Jesus didn't have a human father, He didn't get sin. Maybe. I don't know.

The Bible doesn't say. The Bible says Gabriel came to Mary and told her that she would conceive and bear a son and that it would be in the power of the Holy Spirit that that would come about. God is His Father.

He is the Son. He is the only begotten Son. We'll talk about that phrase, only begotten.

But for now, orthodoxy, point one, person and work of Christ. His person, He is undiminished deity and true humanity in one person forever. You should just memorize that phrase.

Take it to the bank. It is all through Scripture. Jesus is undiminished deity and true humanity in one person forever.

We'll do like the big churches and have you repeat after me. I'm going to say it one more time. Now listen, then I'm going to have you say it with me.

Jesus is undiminished deity and true humanity in one person forever. Ready? Jesus is undiminished deity and true humanity in one person forever. One more time.

Jesus is undiminished deity and true humanity in one person forever. Don't forget that. That is your faith.

If any of those statements are not true, you are not safe. You're not going to heaven. You're not going to be resurrected.

There is no salvation. You're dead in your sins. And you might as well get a beer and live it up.

Because that has to be true. Jesus has to be God. He has to be man.

He has to be one person. And He has to be that way forever. And we'll see why when we get back, we're going to come full circle having traveled through the religions of the world and these cults.

We'll come back to Orthodox Christianity and you'll see why these truths are so important and where they are found in Scripture. Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason for the hope that is in you. Why do you believe that Jesus is undiminished deity and true humanity? Before this study is over, you will be able to answer that question from Scripture.

And you need to be able to answer it. Heaven help us if we don't know why we believe what we believe. Well, my dad said so.

My mom said so. Sam said so. That's not good enough.

Please, don't ever say, Sam said so. I will strangle you. You say, the Bible says.

All your responses ought to be prefaced with the Bible says. Don't believe me, believe your Bible. That's why God gave you your own personal copy with your name on the front is so you could have confidence in God's Word.

That's where your confidence comes from. So, cults deny the deity of Christ. Anybody who says Jesus is not undiminished deity and true humanity in one person forever is not Orthodox.

That is not Christianity. Whatever it is, it's not Christianity. Third, what was the first thing? What's the first thing about a cult? What do they believe? It's us or nothing.

You're in our cult and you're saved or you're out of our cult and you are lost. Not saved. Secondly, they do not believe in the deity of Christ.

Third, they deny that your salvation comes by faith in Christ. You can't just believe in Christ and be saved. This sort of follows from not believing in the deity of Christ, right? If Jesus is not who he claims to be, who the Bible says he is, then you can't get saved just by believing in Christ.

You've got to do something else. And most cults are characterized by some system of works. You have to do something to get yourself saved.

You can't just trust Christ. Fourth, cults have leaders. And cults put great stock in their leader.

Our guy is touched by God. Our guy is in contact with God. Our guy is much better than any other guy.

It's sort of like having a pope. It's sort of like having your own group's little apostle. And this is

condemned in the Word of God.

What does Paul say to the Corinthians? I hear, Paul writes, I hear that in your church you've got people splitting up under men and saying, well, Apollos is my guy. And these people over here say, well, Apollos? Who's Apollos? He didn't know the Lord. Apollos, you're just listening to a windbag.

He's a big talker. He's very eloquent. He speaks well, and you've just been carried off by his oratory.

He's a charismatic talker, so you're an Apollinarian or something. Well, we follow Peter. Peter was with the Lord.

Peter walked on water. And the first people say, well, yeah, Peter denied the Lord. So there.

That's why we follow Apollos. And so they split up. We follow Peter.

We follow Apollos. Then you have this other group. Well, we follow Paul.

Jesus came and talked to Paul on the road to Damascus. Paul knows the Old Testament like the back of his hand. He used to be a Pharisee.

He studied at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the greatest Old Testament scholars the world has ever seen. And so we follow Paul. And Paul said, shame on you for following a man.

You don't follow a man. And in this day and age, you don't follow a pastor. You are not called somethingists.

You are not Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians. You are not Episcopalians. And heaven help you, you are not Samists.

You are Christians. Christians. What does Christian mean? A follower of who? Jesus Christ.

That's orthodoxy. The person and work of Jesus Christ. Don't forget that.

You follow Christ. Cultists follow a man. They believe that they have a leader and this leader is some kind of special glow-in-the-dark grade-A nickel-plated conduit to God.

And he's got the Word. He's got the magic beans. Or he's got the golden glasses.

Or he's got the angel Moron or somebody talking to him. Moroni. And he's got the secret scoop.

Something outside the Bible. This is the key. Something outside the Bible.

He's got the point he had in the big church in Rome. That's not Christianity. I'm sorry and all apologies to Beneficent or whoever he is now.

We lost John Paul and now we've got Pope Benedict. Americans have to think twice when you have a Pope named Benedict. I don't even need Eggs Benedict because I'm afraid they're going to turn on me.

Cultists believe that they have a leader who's got a secret red phone to God. Many cults claim the Bible also and they'll talk about the Bible but they pick and choose. They carve up the Bible.

They've got a Thomas Jefferson Bible with half the pages hacked up and they say, well, this verse right here and this verse right here and this verse over here. And they cherry-pick little parts of the Word of God. Some of them change the Word of God and get their own special anonymous translation so that they can get it to say what they want it to say.

These are the characteristics of cults. I've given you about five things. Now, there are four major cults in the world today and then there are a whole slew of little deviant minor offshoot cults.

But these are ones that you're likely to run into. We might be able to get through all four. I'm going to talk about the Unitarians.

Have you ever heard of Unitarians? What does that sound like? Unitarian? If you don't have a bicycle and you have a unicycle, what have you got? How many wheels does your unicycle have? One. E pluribus unum. Unum, uni is one.

Uni-versal. You've got one versal. You've got one place.

One spot. Unitarianism, their claim to fame is there is no trinity. They're not Trinitarian.

They're Unitarian. No separation between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Now, this is probably the oldest cult.

This cropped up way back in the 2nd and 3rd century. There was a real famous Unitarian named Arian. Arian the Unitarian.

That's what they called it. Arian the Unitarian. And they call it Arianism.

And he became so popular and got such a big thing going that when Constantine, the emperor, down in 300-something, 325, I believe, Constantine, when he was trying to unite everybody and he said, well, I've got too many divisions. I've got too many splits. I've got people going every which way.

They're fighting and duking it out over religion. We're just going to have one religion and my mom had a dream and she saw a cross and so it's going to be Christianity. I don't know if Constantine was actually a Christian or not.

He did it for political expediency. One of the things he did is he said, you Christians get together and figure out your Christianity and quit squabbling over it. Get it figured out and let's get one

Christianity.

We'll herd everybody into that and we'll get the weird Christianity off the table. And so they did and they had a council at Nicaea. And one of the big issues they had to settle is, well, what kind of a God do we have? Is he one God doing the sock puppet thing where he's got a little Jesus sock puppet and a little Holy Spirit sock puppet but it's really just one God? Or are there three separate individuals who get together every once in a while? Or is there God who is three in one? And I think of this like a family.

Like a family with a single child. You have a father and you have a mother and you have a child. And you say, well, when Patty and I only had our first daughter, we had Elizabeth and somebody would say, well, the Hulls are coming over.

Well, that would be Sam and Patty and Elizabeth. That's three and there's lots of households that have maybe one child. And so you've got three.

You can have a corporation and maybe it's got three board members. And so when you say Xerox has spoken if Xerox had a board of three individuals on it you would just say, well, that's the company policy. That's the company's direction.

That's what they're doing. Xerox is going to do this. Xerox is going to take over this company.

Xerox is going to build this machine. Whatever it may be. Or Honeywell or whoever.

You just have a company and it's got this three member board and they make the decisions and you say, well, that's IBM. That's Microsoft. You've got Apple and maybe Steve Jobs and Wozniak or whoever.

You get three guys together and that makes the company. And the easiest way for me to understand the Trinity is to think of it as the God incorporation. It's God Inc.

Incorporated. They are in the same thing but they are three separate and distinct individuals but they have an identical essence. They're equally sovereign.

They're equally righteous. They're equally just. They're equally loving.

They're equally omnipresent and omnipotent. They're equally true. They're equally compassionate.

They have an equal sense of humor. There are a lot of characteristics of God and they are shared among the three members. However, for the purposes of human history, they have organized themselves into a hierarchy.

And so, if you think of the three members of the Trinity as being member A, member B, and member C or better yet, even that sort of orders them, doesn't it? Let's say you've got member blue, member red, and member green. That's probably a better analogy because colors, unless

you have a favorite, they're different but equal. Well, member red is going to be God the Father.

Member blue is going to be God the Son. And member green is going to be God the Spirit. And during the time of human history you have red, you have member, the first member says, well, I'm going to be God the Father.

I will do the planning. The son is going to be the second member. He will do the execution.

And you have the third member and he will do the empowering and the enabling. And there is a system of voluntary subordination, even though they are equal. And it's important to understand that about the Trinity because think about being married.

Think about a husband and wife. There is a system of subordination in marriage, isn't there? Husband is the head of the house. Husband is accountable to God for what the family does.

When God holds a household to account, he's not going to go to the wife. He's going to go to the husband. He gets credit for the good things.

He gets dinged for the bad things. He is the head of the house. Now, can two equals enter into an arrangement where one is subordinate to the other? Yes.

God has done it. There are three equals and they have voluntarily subordinated themselves. That subordination does not make the Holy Spirit inferior to Jesus and it doesn't make Jesus inferior to the Father.

It is a voluntary arrangement for the purposes of accomplishing a goal. Marriage is a voluntary system of authority and submission for the purpose of accomplishing a goal, for the purpose of having a household and raising a family and reflecting a picture of Christ in the church. It has nothing to do with value.

It has nothing to do with equality. Don't let any feminist, women's lib, weirdness get a hold of your brain. You are not inferior if you submit.

You know what the Bible says? You know what the Bible says to every single Christian? Submit yourselves one to another in love. Everybody is supposed to submit. I am supposed to submit.

Every man, every husband is supposed to submit. So, now you have to figure out, well, if everybody submits, we'll be all Indians and no chiefs. If everybody is in authority, we'll have all chiefs and no Indians.

So, what does it mean? We have to have discernment. In the Old Testament they said the Levites are the priests, the sons of David are the kings, and that's how it's going to work. It was a no-brainer.

But in the church, we have to be smarter. We have to think. We have to figure out.

Well, now, is this an occasion where I should take a leadership role? Or is this an occasion where I should submit? Submit yourselves under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time. One of the great things about military training is, when you go to boot camp or you go to your initial officer training, you submit. And even though on paper your rank may be higher than the people who are training you, a lot of brand-spanking-new freshly-minted officers get trained by enlisted and staff NCOs and so on.

But, they submit so that they can be exalted in due time and they'll be a better officer because they have been trained and they have submitted. And they don't have an arrogance and say, well, you can't tell me which way to wear my belt buckle because I'm an officer and you're enlisted, so salute and go away. You don't do that.

Well, we submit. This is one of the classic things that cults deny. They deny the Trinity.

They deny that there is an authority structure that God has self-imposed with those three members. It's voluntary. It says nothing about equality.

So, you think about that when some of you all, one of these days, you'll be saying your marriage vows. Some people renew their marriage vows. Some people regret their marriage vows.

People think about them and say, why did I say love, honor, and obey? Who was it that said that? Oh, it was Laura Ingalls, the Little House on the Prairie woman. She met the man of her dreams there, Almanzo Wilder, and she got married. But she told him they were riding along in the buggy and she said, he asked her to marry him and she said, yes, but I have to tell you this, when we get up there and say the words, I'll say love and honor, but I will not say obey.

Now, this was back in the late 1800s. She was a woman's liver before a woman's lip was cool. And she was way out in the prairie where there wasn't anybody waving a flag, but she said, I will not say obey.

And you know why? She misunderstood this principle of voluntary submission in love. And we're all supposed to do it. And there's a time and a place to be submissive and to give place.

What's the definition of love? What's our working understanding of love? How do we describe it? Love is sacrificial towards self and beneficial toward others. That's the nature. That's the description of love, isn't it? So what is love again? Sacrificial towards self, beneficial toward others.

And we've all received it, haven't we? We've had parents who made sacrifices to benefit us. A lot of us have spouses who make sacrifices to be beneficial toward us. Sometimes we have children as parents who make sacrifices that benefit the parents.

That's love. It's relatively meaningless to just say the words, I love you. The expression of love is not always meaningless, but it can be.

Lots of people say, I love you. And they don't even know what they're saying. The expression of love is self-sacrifice for someone else's benefit.

That's what Jesus did on the cross. Greater love hath no man than this. All of this gets missed in a cult because they don't understand submission.

They don't understand self-sacrifice because they don't believe Jesus died to redeem the world. They don't believe that Jesus is the Son of God. And they don't believe when they believe in God, they think he's a Unitarian God.

He's just one God, and he's got a system where he's just expecting people to jump through certain hoops, and then he'll save them. But you do the jumping, you find the hoops, and you jump through them, and then God will look down and say, well, you're a pretty good hoop jumper. I guess I'll save you.

And you're a member of that cult, and those are the only ones I'm going to save, is that cult. Well, Unitarianism has been a long-standing historical phenomenon, but in the modern day, it started, a lot of these cults, nearly all of these four major cults really got a foothold in the 1800s. And Unitarianism really got a foothold, and they had a modern-day apostle of Unitarianism that came up in the 1800s.

His name was William Ellery Channing. He died in 1842, and he's called the Apostle of Unitarianism. William Ellery Channing.

He got sick of Calvinists. He just got sick of them. This Calvinism is depressing.

You've got God coming down, decreeing everything, figuring out who's going to be saved. He just got fed up with it, and he said, boo on that. And so, he got busy and really got Unitarianism going.

In 1819, he gave a sermon that was a watershed sermon that just really, people said, yeah, I'm sick of Calvinism too. I'm going to be a Unitarian. So, William Ellery Channing is sort of the father or the apostle of modern Unitarianism.

Well, what do the Unitarians do? What do they believe? We've got to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll see.