

Strange Things You Hear About the Church of Christ (#11 of 12)

"The Church of Christ is a Cult"

Text: Acts 24:1-16

Introduction:

1. Cults! At the mention of the word, Jehovah's Witnesses, "Moonies", Mormons, Scientology, Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God and more rightly come to mind.
2. But strangely there are those who seek to make the same charge against the church of Christ. It is this charge we will examine in this series of studies.

Discussion:

I. Some Preliminary Considerations

1. What is a cult? "In religion and sociology, a cult is a group of people (often a new religious movement) devoted to beliefs and goals which may be contradictory to those held by the majority of society. Its marginal status may come about either due to its novel belief system or due to idiosyncratic practices that cause the surrounding culture to regard it as far outside the mainstream" (Wikipedia)
2. Comparing our passage and the definition of cult, what do we have? (cf. Eccl. 1:9)

II. An Examination of the Charge

1. Another definition by Walter Martin, "By cultism we mean the adherence to doctrines which are pointedly contradictory to orthodox Christianity and which yet claim the distinction of either tracing their origin to orthodox sources or of being in essential harmony with those sources. Cultism, in short, is any major deviation from orthodox Christianity relative to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith."
2. A composite of the marks of a cult... does the church fit them?
 - (1) Beliefs and goals contradictory to society
 - (2) Far outside the mainstream
 - (3) Contrary to orthodox Christianity... deviation from the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith
3. To the first two, we would claim that they are true – and always have been true of the Lord's church! (Matthew 7:13-14; 21-23; Luke 6:26; John 6:59-69; 15:18-21; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Timothy 4:1-4; etc.)
4. To the third, one need only examine the previous lessons to see who is truly deviating from orthodox Christianity (in reality they mean "contemporary"!)
 - (1) For example, one of the doctrines peculiar to many in this part of their definition is that a cult rejects the doctrine of faith only.
 - (2) Another is the denial of His coming personal and literal return.
When compared to God's teaching, who is deviating?! (cf. James 2:24; Mark 9:1)

Conclusion:

1. Is the church of Christ a cult? No, but since her inception in the first century the charge has been made.
2. Honest examination will though show that there are many denominations which, if honest with their definitions, would in fact be defined as cults. A charge we would not level at the majority of world religions – but we would affirm that they are false religions.
3. Why is the charge then made? It is easier to fling such labels than to truly confront teachings. God of course desires and demands the latter (Acts 17:11).