

Cults and Religions

Seven Rivers Presbyterian Church, Winter 2019

CLASS SCHEDULE

January 16	Unit 1	Introduction to Cults and Religions <i>Mormonism (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)</i> Doctrine of Revelation
January 23	Unit 2	<i>Jehovah's Witnesses (Watchtower Bible and Tract Society)</i> Doctrine of Jesus
January 30	Unit 3	<i>Christian Science, Scientology</i> Doctrine of Humanity and Sin
February 6	Unit 4	<i>Islam</i> Doctrine of God
February 13	Unit 5	<i>Hinduism, Buddhism, New Age</i> Doctrine of Salvation

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Martin, Walter. *The Kingdom of the Cults*. Edited by Ravi Zacharias, Bethany House Publ., 2003.

Rhodes, Ron. *The Challenge of the Cults and New Religions*. Zondervan, 2013

Christianity, Cults & Religions. Rose Pub., 2008.

Ankerberg, John, et al. *Facts On Series*. Harvest House Publishers, 2009.

"Religious Landscape Study." Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project,

<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>

UNIT 1

INTRODUCTION TO CULTS AND RELIGIONS

“Nobody joins a cult, nobody joins something they think is going to hurt them. You join a religious organization, or a political movement, and you join with people that you really like.”

–Deborah Layton, quoted in *Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple*

I/ Defining Terms

A. What is a religion?

“A religion is a set of beliefs that answers five ultimate questions:

1. What is ultimate reality?
2. What is the nature of the world?
3. What is the nature of humanity?
4. What is humanity’s primary problem?
5. What happens to us after death?”

–Dean Halverson, *A Compact Guide to World Religions*

B. What is a cult?

“A cult is an ideological organization, that is held together by charismatic relationships, that demands total commitment.” –Benjamin Zablocki, Rutgers University

“Cults grow out of and deviate from a previously established religion...[a cult of Christianity is] a group of people, which claiming to be Christian, embraces a particular doctrinal system taught by an individual leader, group of leaders, or organization, which denies (either explicitly or implicitly) one or more of the central doctrines of the Christian faith as taught in the sixty-six books of the Bible” –Alan Gomes, *Unmasking the Cults*

II/ What Does the Bible Say?

A. The warnings of Scripture

- Matthew 7:15
- Matthew 24:4-5, 24-25
- Acts 20:28-31
- 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15
- Galatians 1:6-9
- Jude 3-4

B. Declaring and defending the gospel

“But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, **always being prepared to make a defense** to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; **yet do it with gentleness and respect.**” –1 Peter 3:15

“Churches that surrender in the face of philosophical challenges, that reduce their doctrinal substance to ‘the lowest-common denominator’, and that fail to offer substantial theological arguments grounded in Scripture, leave their own members in a state of vulnerability to cults and their arguments. Theological immaturity and doctrinal ambiguity represent an open invitation for cults old and new to proliferate. Beyond this, when Christians appear to be befuddled, embarrassed, or inept in the defense of the faith, the Church’s witness is inevitably weakened.” –R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

“In effect, the cultist is faced with a dilemma: ‘How can this person (the Christian) be such an acceptable personality yet not share my (the cultist’s) theology?’ The cultist, then, quite often begins to wonder how it is possible for the Christian to accept him as a person and yet not accept his beliefs. This can be the beginning of rapport in the realm of personal evangelism...A discerning Christian who gives every indication of being unprejudiced, reasonably learned, and possessed of a genuine love for the welfare of the cultist himself can have a devastating effect upon the conditioning apparatus of any cult system...our main task is to communicate to those who are by their very adherence to cultic systems of belief in virtual isolation from the Christian message.” –Walter Martin and Ravi Zacharias, *The Kingdom of the Cults*

“Therefore, having this ministry **by the mercy of God**, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has **blinded the minds of the unbelievers**, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. **For what we proclaim is not ourselves**, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. **For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**” –2 Corinthians 4:1-6

MORMONISM (THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS)

I/ History

- December 23, 1805 –
- 1820 –
- 1823 –
- 1827 –
- 1829 –

- 1830 –
- 1839 –
- June 27, 1844 –
- 1847 –

“My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: ‘they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.’” —Joseph Smith History, *Pearl of Great Price*

“...wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, (the Lamanites) that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them.” —2 Nephi 5:21b

Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. —Doctrine and Covenants 135:3

“Mormonism, as it is called, must stand or fall on the story of Joseph Smith. He was either a Prophet of God, divinely called, properly appointed and commissioned or he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground. If Joseph was a deceiver, who willfully attempted to mislead people, then he should be exposed, his claims should be refuted, and his doctrines shown to be false...” —President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*

II/ Doctrine

A. God

Christianity	Mormonism
Only one God	Many gods
Trinity	Tritheism
Unchangeable	Changed to become God
Pure Spirit	Has a physical body

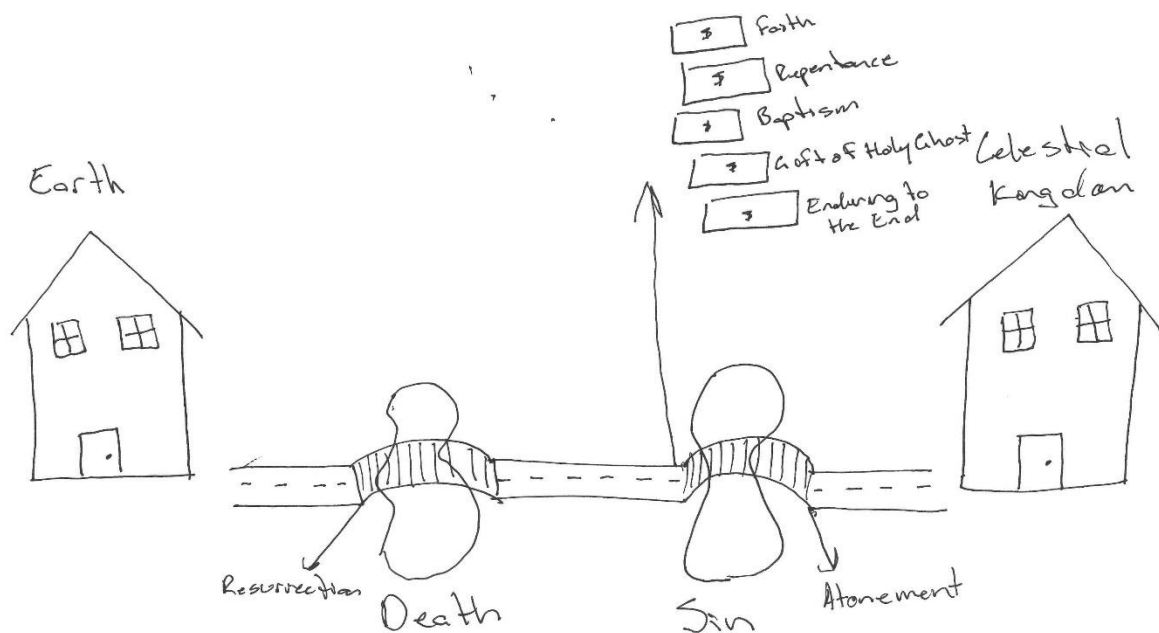
B. Jesus

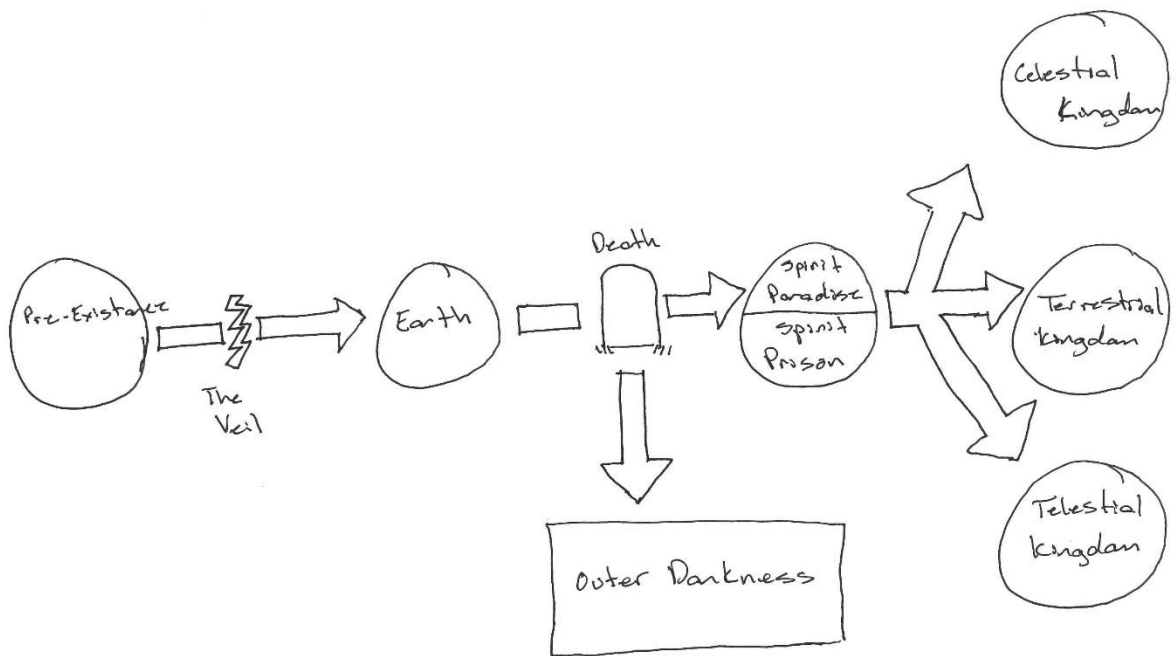
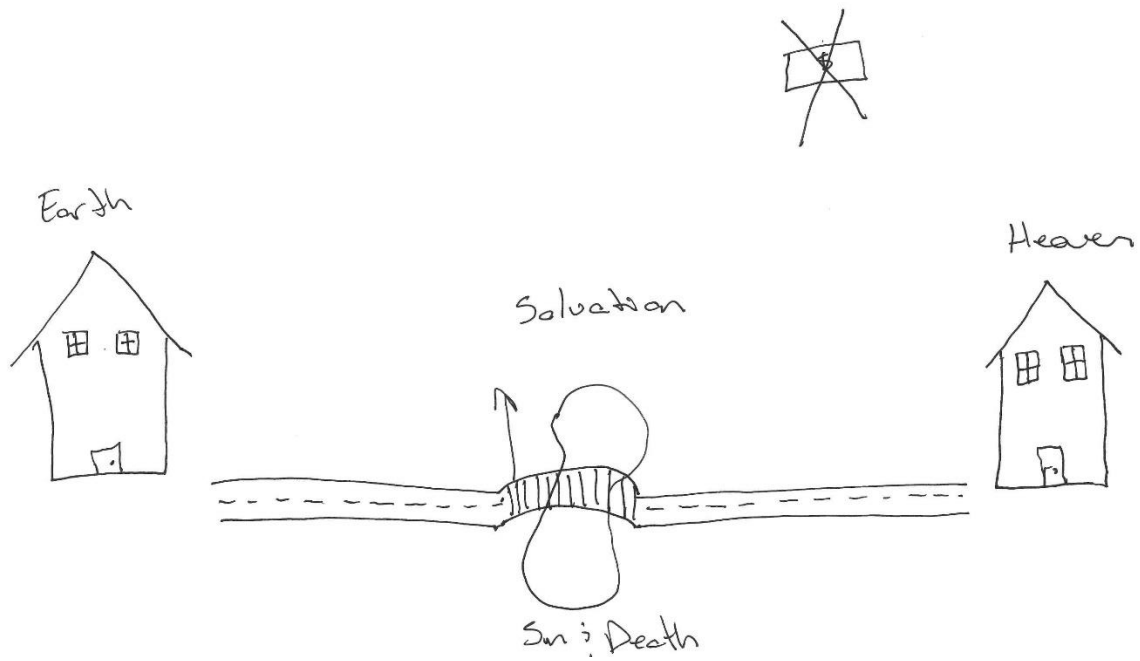
Christianity	Mormonism
Eternal	Not eternal
Uncreated	Procreated
Unique Son of God	Brother of Lucifer
Same essence as God	Different being
One with God	Separate God
No need of salvation	Earned salvation

C. Humanity and Sin

“The decision of Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit was not a sin, as it is sometimes considered by other Christian churches. It was a transgression – an act that was formally prohibited but not inherently wrong...Their choice did not come from a desire to disobey the Lord, but from a desire to gain wisdom. Because of this choice, we have the opportunity to come to earth and learn, as Adam and Eve did, how to choose good over evil. Express your gratitude for Adam and Eve and the choice they made...” –Preparing for Exaltation, Mormon Sunday School material

D. Salvation





E. Revelation

i. Four “standard works”

a. The Book of Mormon

“I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.” (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:461.)

“...the Book of Mormon is the keystone of [our] testimony. Just as the arch crumbles if the keystone is removed, so does all the Church stand or fall with the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.” –President Ezra T. Benson

b. The Doctrine and Covenants

c. The Pearl of Great Price

d. The Revised KJV Bible (Joseph Smith Translation – JST)

“We believe the Bible to be the Word of God as far as it is translated correctly.” –8th Article of Faith

“The Prophet’s main work of revising, correcting, or translating the Bible was done during the three-year period from June 1830 to July 1833. During this time he and his scribes went through the Old and New Testaments of the King James Version and produced nearly 500 pages of manuscript, containing thousands of variant readings and new passages that clarify and enhance the message of the Bible.”

“And that seer will I bless, and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise I give unto you; for I will remember you from generation to generation; and his name shall be called Joseph, and is shall be after the name of his father; and he shall be like unto you; for the thing which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand shall bring my people unto salvation.” –Genesis 50:33

“The Bible, as it has been transmitted over the centuries, has suffered the loss of many plain and pernicious parts.” –*Church News*, June 20, 1992

“Who in his right mind could for one moment suppose the Bible in its present form to be a perfect guide? Who knows that even one verse of the Bible has escaped pollution, so as to convey the same sense now that it did in the original?” –Apostle Orson Pratt

ii. Problems with the “standard works”

- Revelation 22:18-19
- Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32
- Proverbs 30:5-6
- Hebrews 1:1-2

iii. The problem of continuing revelation

iv. Epistemology

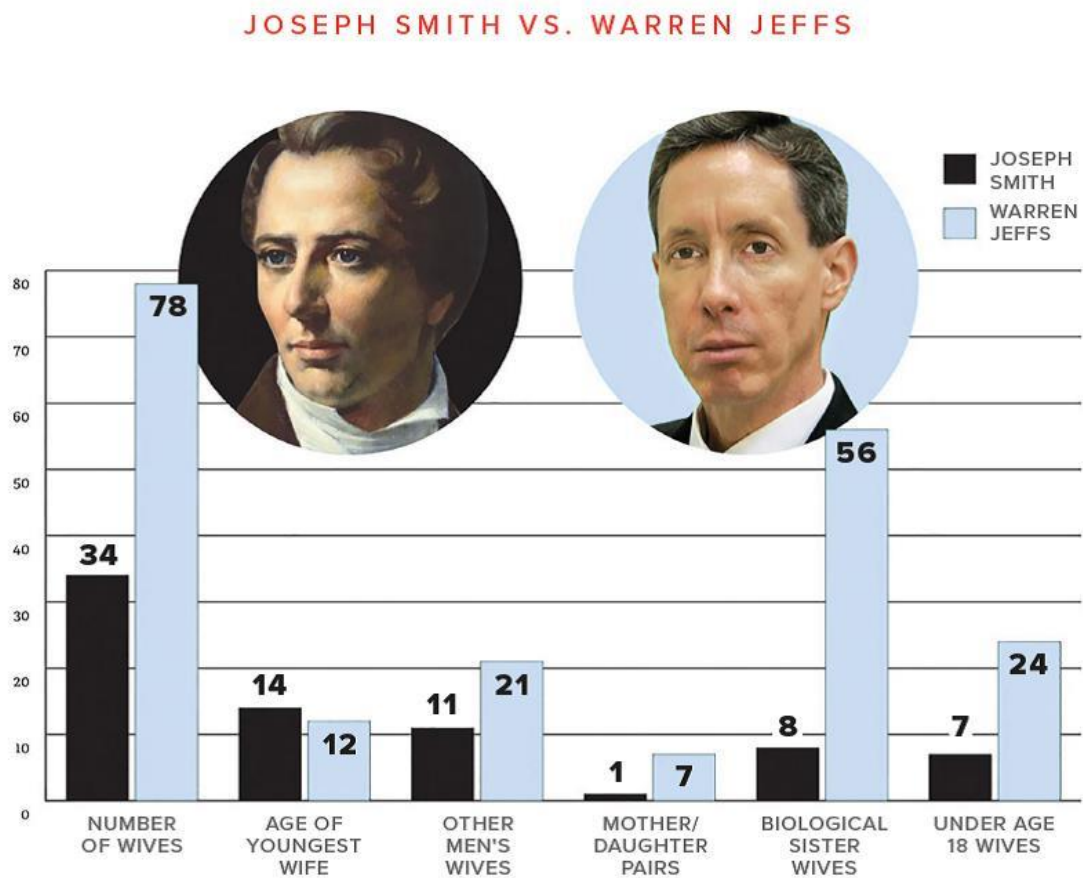
“Behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.” –Doctrine and Covenants 9:8

- Jeremiah 17:9
- 2 Timothy 2:15
- 1 Thessalonians 5:21
- Acts 17:11-12

v. The reliability of the Christian Bible

F. Other doctrines

i. Polygamy



ii. The Temple

a. The Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods

b. Secret rites

c. Baptism

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEwbYzl-pyk>

III/ Evangelism

“Mormonism is Christianity; Christianity is Mormonism...Mormons are true Christians.” –
Apostle Bruce R. McConkie

- Are you a Christian?
- Do you believe in the Bible?
- Do you believe in Jesus?
- Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?
- Do you believe that He atoned for our sins?
- Do you believe that Jesus rose from the dead?
- Do you believe in salvation by grace?
- Do you believe in the Trinity?

a. The meaning of words

b. Patience

c. The gospel

“For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.” –2 Nephi 25:23