

The Opening Of “Heaven’s Gate”

“Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord.”

Jeremiah 23:32

A couple of weeks ago, I had the opportunity to discuss if the church of Christ was a cult or not. It reminded me of a day almost 20 years ago that is still vivid in my mind. As the local police department’s video camera panned through the southern California mansion, the solemn bodies draped with purple shrouds reminded the country once again of the grim reality and danger of false teachers. The cult’s leader explained how his followers would take their lives and be transported to an alien spacecraft traveling in the tail of the Hale-Bopp comet. The desired result of this eccentric teaching was transportation to the “next level,” the Heaven’s Gate term for the kingdom of God. Although the story was rather bizarre, the leader had espoused this “doctrine” for over 20 years.

Of course, the sad end to the story was that the 39 members of the cult who believed in this person ended their lives. You may be asking yourself, “How could these people believe in such a doctrine and then willingly take their own lives?” The answer is simple. There is power in words and consequently power in teaching. Those people killed themselves because they were looking for something that made sense; something that gave meaning to their lives. It is so unfortunate that false teaching was what made so much sense to them.

If you are familiar with the Bible, you know false teaching is not new. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, one finds many instances where truth was set aside to broadcast what was false. In fact, Peter even warned about false teachers (2 Peter 2:1). Those 39 people literally fulfilled Peter’s prophecy. Perhaps though what is saddest is the thought of all those souls who will end up in eternal torment because of the power of false teaching.

Whereas the gospel is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16), false teaching is the power of Satan for eternal condemnation. Although I do believe the gospel is the ultimate power, I must admit that false teaching does possess a measure of power. If it were powerless, we would have never seen the haunting images so many years ago. The realization of this power by those graphic images and twisted beliefs reminds one the appeal of 1 John 4:1 to “try the spirits”.

Tragedies such as this need to always remind us of the preciousness of truth. The truth will set us free (John 8:32), not chain us to fantastic and fanciful tales of how we will be catapulted to the “next level.” I can think of no deadlier poison than falsehood. I can think of no greater calamity than the perpetuation of error. We ought never to laugh or scoff at error. When sound, scriptural teaching is being supplanted by what is false, we

should be dismayed and do what we can to make sure people see the light of God's divine truth.

Kyle Campbell